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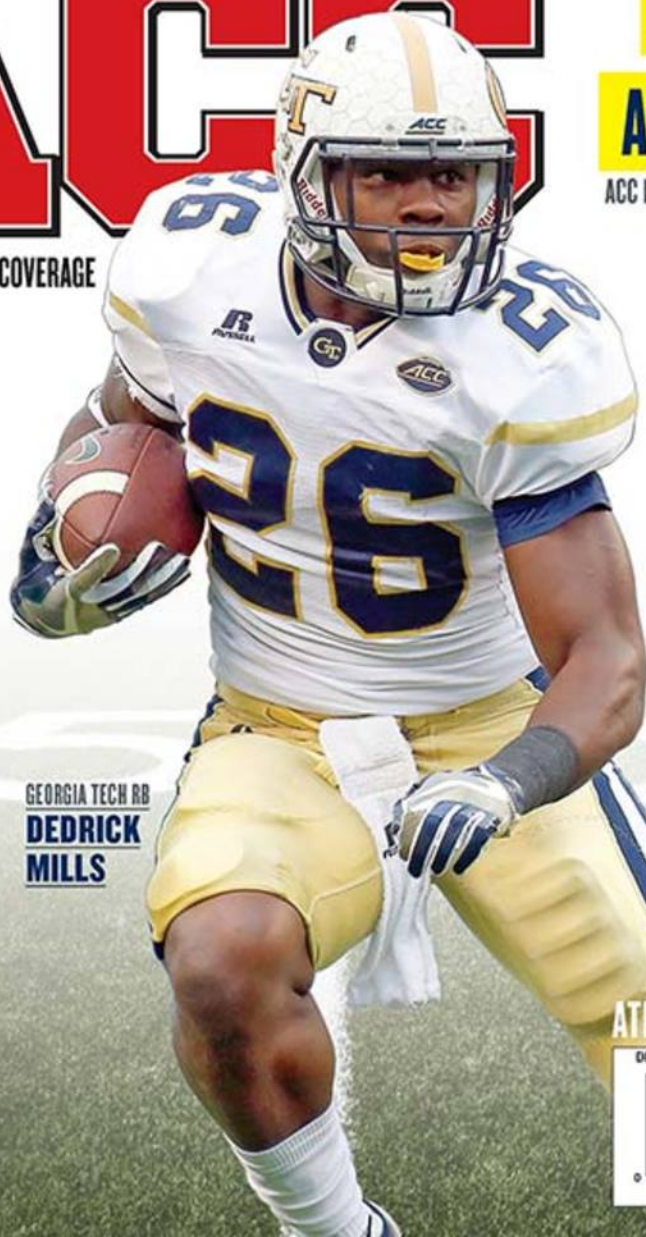
THE
**TOP 50
PLAYERS**

OF THE ATHLON ERA

&

**TOP 50
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IN COLLEGE FOOTBALL

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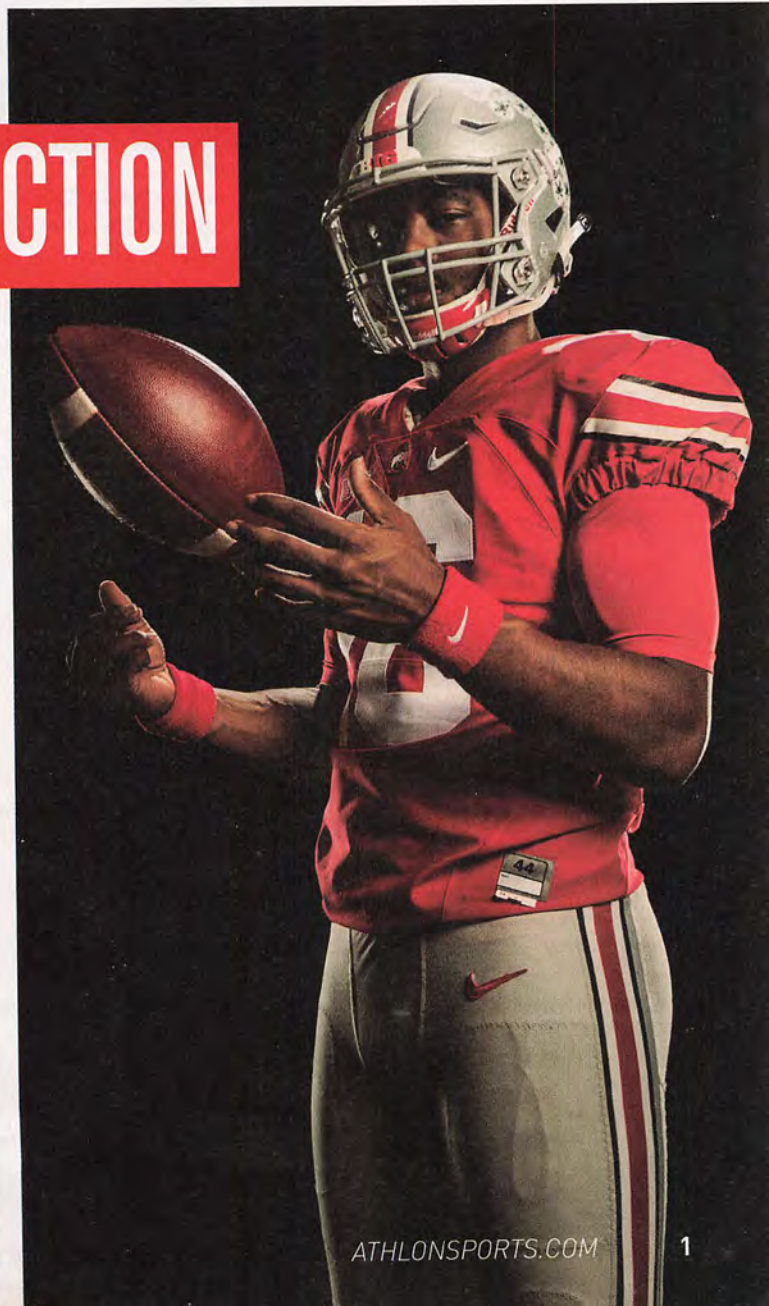
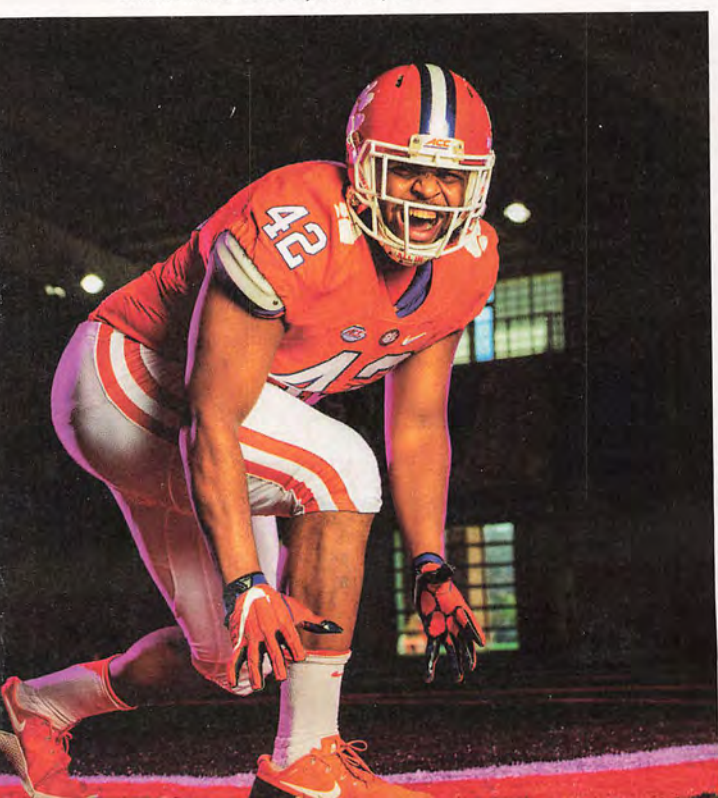
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LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

Some of the nation's most prominent players struck an offseason pose for the *Athlon Sports* cameras: (clockwise from top left) Louisville's Lamar Jackson, Oklahoma's Baker Mayfield, Ohio State's J.T. Barrett and Clemson's Christian Wilkins. Will one of them strike a Heisman pose this season?

Jackson, Barrett: Matt Hernandez; Mayfield: Chris Covatta; Wilkins: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports



2007

Athlon Sports Football Throwback Covers

REVISITING OUR 2007
AND 2012 ANNUALS

The SEC West has been the focus of the college football world for most of the last decade, and one man is primarily responsible. In 2007, we heralded the inaugural season of the Nick Saban era with a rather low-key blurb: "Tide Turns Under Saban." Little did we know that Saban would dominate college football on a level that would impress even beloved Bama predecessor Bear Bryant (although we certainly suspected that it was possible), or that he would help elevate the profile of his division rivals. Since St. Nick's arrival in Tuscaloosa, it's been like Christmas year-round for the SEC West, which has won a combined six national titles —



four by Saban's Tide and one each by LSU and Bama's Iron Bowl rival Auburn. And that's not to mention Mississippi State's brief ascension to No. 1 in the land behind Dak Prescott; or Ole Miss' resurgence (including a pair of wins over the highly ranked Tide); or Johnny Manziel's Heisman-winning season at Texas A&M. The SEC West has seen more than its share of All-America talent, but none

2012


more electrifying than the Honey Badger. LSU's Tyrann Mathieu graced our 2012 cover only to see his college career end prematurely due to a violation of team rules. That temporary setback behind him, he embarked on an All-Pro NFL career, joining several SEC West brethren in dominating at the next level as well. Yes, the Tide definitely turned in 2007. A decade later, there's no end in sight.

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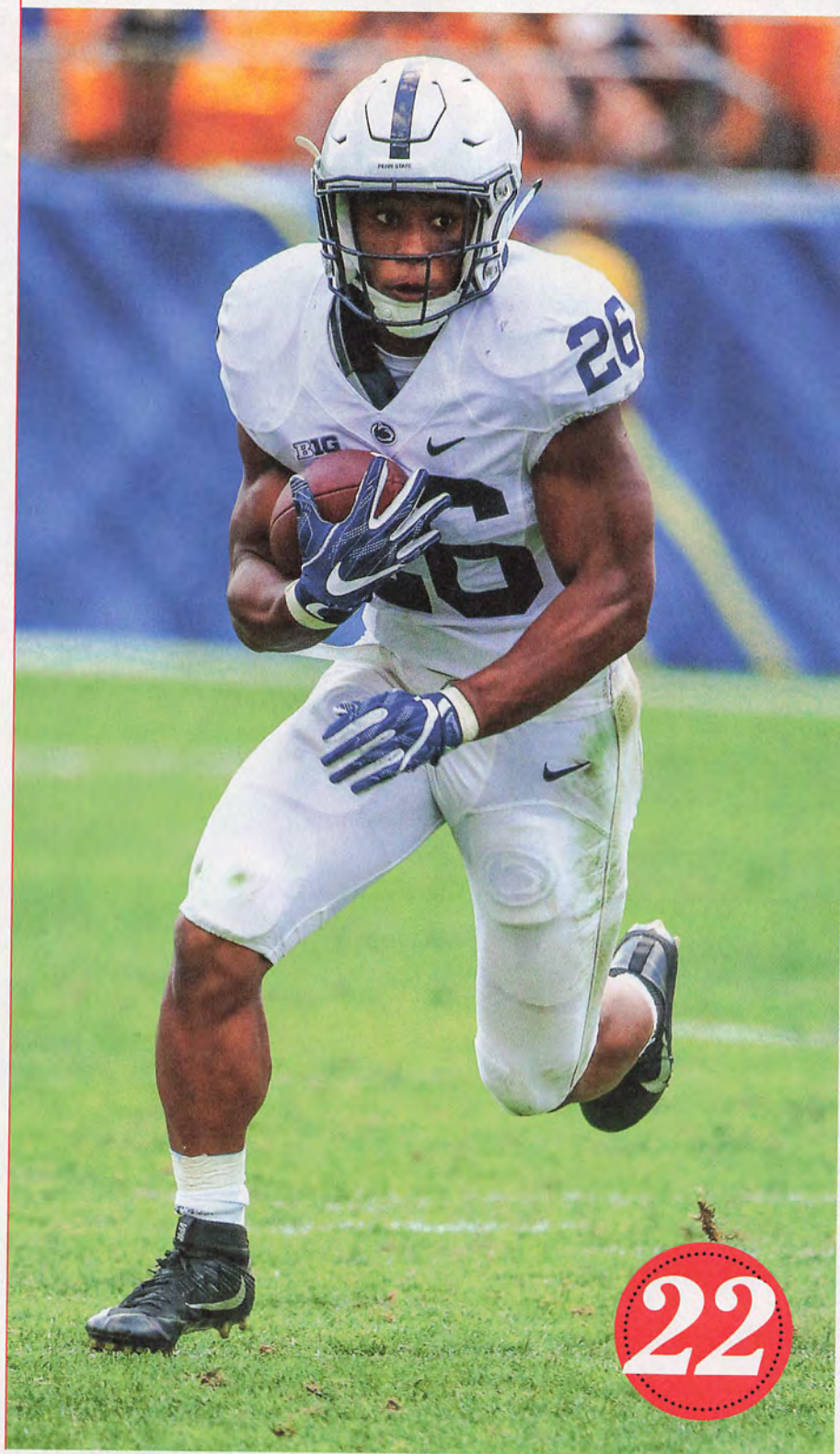
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Athlon Sports PRESEASON TOP 25

1

ALABAMA Crimson Tide

Crimson Tide fans may not be able to prevent the image of Clemson's last-second touchdown in the national championship game from recurring in their minds, but they can bet that Nick Saban has deleted the video from his memory bank. Anybody who complains that winning the national title robs him of two weeks of recruiting is always looking ahead to the next challenge. And even though Bama failed to complete the first-ever 15-0 season in modern college football history, Saban didn't mourn the loss too long.

He had work to do.

The Process heads into 2017 firmly in place and as the clearest indication of Alabama's overall strength. Several years of recruiting the nation's best players, combined with Saban's unstinting commitment to maintaining — and constantly trying to improve — a championship culture, make the Crimson Tide the national championship favorite every year. This season is no different. Even though Bama sustained some huge graduation and early exit losses, it's silly to think the team isn't poised for another serious national championship bid.

Last year at this time, no one knew that quarterback Jalen Hurts would account for 36 touchdowns and be one of the nation's most dangerous multi-threat players. He's back, and it's time to learn the identities of the next group of young standouts. They will need to step in at linebacker, defensive end and receiver. And they will.

Meanwhile, proven studs in safeties Minkah Fitzpatrick and Ronnie Harrison, wideout Calvin Ridley, running backs Damien Harris and Bo Scarbrough and offensive linemen Bradley Bozeman and Jonah Williams are back to terrorize the SEC and beyond. Hell, even the Tide's punter, senior JK Scott, is a standout.

The waning moments of the 2016 season may not have been ideal, but Tide fans would do best to emulate Saban and move forward confidently. Big things lie ahead, just like always.



ALABAMA

2 OHIO STATE Buckeyes

About the only good thing that came out of the Buckeyes' 31-0 dismantling at the hands of Clemson in the CFP Playoff semis last season was that the Tigers went on to defeat Alabama for the title. That way, the OSU defeat didn't look quite so bad. Okay, it was still pretty bad.

There are those who believe the substantial loss of talent from last year's club will make things even worse in 2017. Those people would be wrong. Even though the Buckeyes did sustain a serious talent drain — particularly in the secondary and at wideout — Urban Meyer's recruiting magic has produced a roster filled with young standouts who might in the long run (and, for some, the short run) be better than the people they are replacing. This year's class alone has some of the best talent Meyer has attracted to Columbus, and that's saying something.

Quarterback J.T. Barrett and tailback Mike Weber return to trigger an offense that will again be mighty dangerous. Yes, some young receivers must step up, but the O-line will be nasty. The defensive front will be even better, thanks to the return of every contributor of note from last year. No matter what the other 13 Big Ten schools do, they are still chasing Ohio State. Just about everybody else around the country is, too.



AFTER THE GAME

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3 FLORIDA STATE

Seminoles

It would be remarkable if the Seminoles bookended the other 12 or 13 potential games on their schedule with matchups against Alabama. One of those contests is already a given: FSU opens with the Crimson Tide in Atlanta on Sept. 2. If Jimbo Fisher wants to face his mentor, Nick Saban, in the CFP, he'll need to figure a few things out, along with finding a way to beat Clemson for the first time in a couple years.

Job 1 is determining who gets to run the football after Dalvin Cook authored his own chapter in the Florida State record book. Jacques Patrick is a possibility — he averaged 5.7 yards per carry last year — but the best bet to be the featured back is freshman Cam Akers, the nation's top-rated prep at the position. Both of them would like the Seminoles O-line to grow into something reliable and consistent, not the easiest chore. QB Deondre Francois is even more interested in that. He's a threat to run or pass, but he must become more accurate through the air. If that happens, look out.

DeMarcus Walker and his 16 sacks are gone, but linebacker Matthew Thomas is a tackling machine, and the return of safety Derwin James helps the secondary. FSU is deep, fast and talented. That should be enough to get the Seminoles to the playoff. The rest is up to Alabama.

4 WASHINGTON

Huskies

Forget everything you saw in the Huskies' CFP loss to Alabama. The anemic running attack. The sight of Bo Scarbrough dashing down the left sideline on his decisive touchdown run. Focus instead on U-Dub's Pac-12 title, sizzling offense and Chris Petersen's ability to crank it up to 11 in his third season in Seattle.

Washington fans who have gagged at the repeated love given to their Pacific Northwest rivals to the south will be delighted to know that their program is ascendant. Despite some key losses to the NFL — wideout John Ross, most of the secondary — the Huskies have the look of a team ready for some long-term prosperity. It starts with QB Jake Browning, who will again pile up the stats with receivers Dante Pettis and Chico McClatcher. Running backs Myles Gaskin and Lavon Coleman give UW plenty of balance, and a veteran offensive line will bully front sevens throughout the west.

Yes, the defensive backfield needs to be recast, although safety Taylor Rapp had four picks last year. But the front seven is a nasty bunch that spends long stretches in enemy backfields. Last year may not have had a championship ending, but Washington provided plenty of reasons to think one could be coming pretty soon.



JAKE BROWNING



SAM DARNOLD

5 USC

Trojans

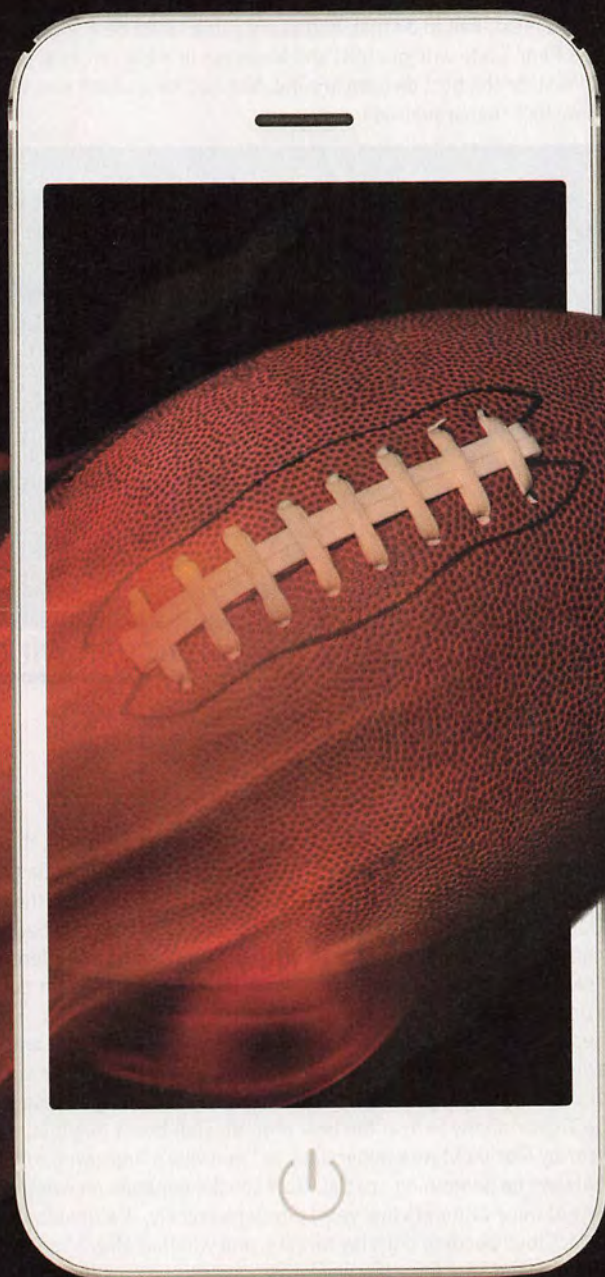
In the Old Days, the folks at USC used to put the Rose Bowl on each season's schedule cards, since the Trojans made so many trips to Pasadena. After last year's big finish that included nine straight wins and the thrilling Granddaddy win over Penn State, the USC ticket office might want to consider putting the College Football Playoff on the card.

The Trojans are finally clear of the Reggie Bush sanctions, the coaching carousel and the Oregon Pac-12 interregnum. A return to normalcy appears on the horizon in Troy, with a deep roster, willing recruits ready to fill in the gaps and a quarterback who could be the best in the nation. Sam Darnold went from third string to L.A. king with his performance in 2016 and returns ready to make a Heisman run. He is without wideout JuJu Smith-Schuster, but he does have ground support from Ronald Jones. It might take the line a little while to coalesce, but the Trojan defense should be able to handle things until that happens. Linebacker Cameron Smith is a tackling machine, and Porter Gustin is part of an angry pass rush up front. After a long period away from the national elite, it looks like USC is back.

Browning: Craig Mitchell/derby; Darnold: Peter Brouillet

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6 PENN STATE

Nittany Lions

Late last September, when the Nittany Lions were sitting at 2-2 and critically wounded after a 49-10 drubbing by Michigan, some were preparing a short list of candidates for James Franklin's job — with good reason. After a nine-game winning streak that included victories over Ohio State and Wisconsin (in the Big Ten title game), Franklin has never been so secure, and PSU is back in the national discussion after a long absence.

The outlook for 2017 is even brighter, thanks to 10 returning offensive starters, most notably gutsy QB Trace McSorley and Saquon Barkley, who could be the nation's best back. If Penn State can play entire games the way it did the second halves of its '16 run of success, it will be among the nation's most potent attacks. The question for this team comes on the other side, where replacing key members of the front seven is a must. Fail to do that, and every game could be a shootout. Plug the holes, and Penn State will join OSU and Michigan in a Big Ten East that will rival the SEC West for the best division around. Not bad for a coach who was updating his résumé less than a year ago.



CHRISTIAN WILKINS

7 CLEMSON

Tigers

It's hard to tell what's shinier and more attractive to recruits at Clemson: the 2016 national championship trophy, or the Tigers' \$55 million football building, which includes a putting green, nap room and NASCAR simulator. Okay, so the car thing isn't true. But the place has just about everything else. Clemson has become the latest "It" program nationally, and a little thing like losing a bunch of offensive skill players and some defensive stalwarts won't keep Dabo Swinney's team out of college football's upper reaches.

Quarterback Deshaun Watson, wideouts Mike Williams and Artavis Scott and running back Wayne Gallman will be missed, but Swinney and his staff have spent the past couple of years selling high school studs on the new on-campus palace, not to mention the Tigers' ability to beat the best around. That boast might be challenged this year by Florida State's superstars or Louisville's improving roster, but Clemson will always be something special. How special depends on whether junior QB Kelly Bryant (nine attempts last year) develops quickly, if wideouts Deon Cain and Ray-Ray McCloud become big-play threats, and whether Brent Venables' defense can handle the lead spot for a few weeks. Standouts such as linebacker Kendall Joseph (124 tackles last year), end Christian Wilkins (13 tackles for a loss), mammoth tackle Dexter Lawrence (7.0 sacks) and safety Van Smith (114 tackles) should make sure the fun at Clemson isn't confined to the putt-putt course and sand volleyball pit at the new Xanadu.



BAKER MAYFIELD

8 OKLAHOMA

Sooners

Just when Sooners coach Bob Stoops thought his biggest concerns would be jump-starting the pass rush and restocking the skill positions on offense, QB Baker Mayfield decided to go hog wild at a bar in Fayetteville and wound up on the police blotter. For a program still trying to escape the stench of the Joe Mixon affair, this was not good news.

Mayfield is back in good graces, though the Sooners do have an intriguing security blanket in Texas A&M transfer Kyler Murray, who also will get a look at wide receiver.

Stoops hopes the arrival of junior college speedster Marquise Brown can help trigger a productive wideout crew and a back or two from a collection of untested holdovers and talented newcomers steps forward. The defense is shifting to the 4-3 full time and will be boosted by a fine secondary led by young corner Jordan Parker. But somebody along the front seven other than outside backer Ogbornia Okoronkwo needs to emerge as a pass rusher, or Big 12 attacks could feast on OU.

9 AUBURN

Tigers

After spending last offseason doing whatever he could to fix the Tigers' defense — hiring Kevin Steele as D-coordinator was a good start — Gus Malzahn now finds himself in the odd predicament of having to make improvements to his offense, the supposed engine of the Auburn program.

The Tigers were 49th in the nation in scoring last year and 43rd in total yards. They didn't reach 20 points in their last three games against FBS opponents. So, Chip Lindsey is on board as the new OC to make the attack more balanced. That means more passing, something that should suit Baylor transfer Jarrett Stidham just fine. Running back Kamryn Pettway is a big-time weapon, and there are several solid targets.

Steele's defense improved considerably last year, and linebacker Deshaun Davis, corner Carlton Davis and safety Tray Matthews are back to continue the growth. If Auburn can get the pass rush going, the Tigers might be known more for that side of the ball than Malzahn's offense, something that might not make the head man happy but could well lead to more wins.

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10 MICHIGAN

Wolverines

Who cares if the Wolverines lost 10 defensive starters and seven from the offense? Michigan still has Jim Harbaugh, and that's all U-M needs. He's out there stirring up the SEC folks by recruiting — and signing — players on their turf. He's buying up all the whole milk in town. And he has everybody in Ann Arbor convinced that losing so many regulars is no big deal, as long as Jimmy H. is running the show. At least the Wolverines have QB Wilton Speight back, although a late-season shoulder injury limited him during some big games. He has good size but must prove he can get the ball downfield, a condition that should be helped by an influx of talented young receivers, most notably freshman Donovan Peoples-Jones.

Harbaugh has always loved the ground game, and sophomore Chris Evans has breakaway speed, although he might not hold up as the lead man. The O-line returns center Mason Cole and guard Ben Bredeson but needs some youngsters to step up. Speaking of moving forward, consider the defense. It's time for 2016 reserves — tackles Rashan Gary and Maurice Hurst, linebackers Josh Metellus and Devin Bush and defensive backs Lavert Hill and David Long — to join lone holdover Mike McCray, a big-play outside linebacker, in another stingy unit.

12 WISCONSIN

Badgers

If Wisconsin wants to celebrate this season's 100th anniversary of Camp Randall Stadium properly, it should turn loose a dozen or so rhinoceroses on the turf and let them slam into each other. Not only will that provide an accurate representation of what has been going on for the ground-bound Badgers program over the past several decades, but it will also serve as an example of what fans can expect this season. It will not shock UW fans if their favorite team once again runs it most of the time (it had more than twice as many rushing tries as passing attempts last year) and puts up a stout forward wall preventing rivals from traversing the field via the run. (Wisconsin was third nationally in rushing D in 2016.)

Even though Corey Clement and Dare Ogunbowale are gone from the backfield, and tackle Ryan Ramczyk left a year early for the NFL, four O-line starters are back to clear the way for Bradrick Shaw and whoever else lines up behind the group of behemoths. If sophomore QB Alex Hornibrook can get the ball downfield to wide-out Jazz Peavy and tight end Troy Fumagalli, the Badgers should score plenty. Not that they have to hit 30 per game with a defense that features a front seven made of iron. The defensive backs need to shape up, though, after last year's collapse against Penn State in the Big Ten title game.

11 LSU

Tigers

Big Ed Orgeron and his gumbo-soaked enthusiasm are finally in charge of the LSU program full-time, and if nothing else, he should provide plenty of entertainment during press conferences, as he twists his Cajun patois around football terminology.

But Orgeron's fun-and-games approach must withstand the expectations and recent anger of the Bengal faithful, who danced in the streets when Les Miles was removed last year after failing to revive the LSU offense. Orgeron hopes his decision to make Matt Canada his offensive coordinator will help holdover QB Danny Etling, who was decidedly ordinary last year, particularly against more talented competition. Canada won't have to convince Etling that handing the ball off to Heisman candidate Derrius Guice is a good idea, especially behind the line the Tigers have. The question is whether LSU can get the ball downfield at all with Etling under center, or whether Canada must turn to either Lowell Narcisse or Myles Brennan, a pair of heralded true freshmen.

The defensive front seven withstood some heavy losses, but so what? Every year it seems as if LSU has plenty of people to replace, and by season's end, it has a fast, angry collection of people there. The secondary should again be top-notch, putting LSU in its usual state: damn good. But are the Tigers good enough in the cutthroat SEC West?



SHANE BUECHELE

13 TEXAS

Longhorns

There's a reason Charlie Strong was hired to lead South Florida not long after getting bounced from Austin: His players loved him, and he set up the Longhorns and new coach Tom Herman for a prosperous 2017 campaign. Strong's sin was that he had three straight losing seasons at a place that thinks anything less than 10 wins is a disaster.

So, Herman comes in with ideas about how to spruce up the facilities, make the players laugh during practice and instill the kind of big-time accountability that led him to be a successful OC at Ohio State and a prosperous (22-4) boss man at Houston.

He'll need the defense to get a little more ornery this year, and that should happen, considering that 13 of last year's top 15 tacklers are back. Not that they did a lot of tackling in '16. Sophomore QB Shane Buechele had a volatile first year, but there were games when he looked pretty darn good. The running game would really benefit from a healthy Chris Warren, but the O-line should be pretty tough. The pieces are there; it's up to Herman to finish what Strong started.



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14 OKLAHOMA STATE

Cowboys

This season, Mike Gundy will be able to tell anyone with the temerity to criticize his players to pick on him, because, "I'm a man. I'm 50." During the decade between his infamous rant and the 2017 season, Gundy led the Cowboys to five 10-win seasons, including last year's 10-3 mark. To repeat that level of success and celebrate a half-century on this planet, Gundy needs to find replacements for six key defensive performers or risk spending an entire season sweating out 45-42 shootouts.

OSU shouldn't have any trouble hanging up 40 or more every Saturday. The return of QB Mason Rudolph, who threw for 4,091 yards and 28 touchdowns with only four picks, assures that. He'll delight in finding big-play man James Washington (19.4 yards per catch, 10 TDs) downfield and Jalen McCleskey (73 receptions) the rest of the time. Running back Justice Hill (1,142 yards) could use a little backup and some stability up front, but he's a dangerous backfield weapon.

All that leaves is the defense, where a new interior line combo is needed, the secondary must find help right away, and linebackers Jordan Burton and Devante Averette must be replaced. Make that side of the ball somewhat sturdy, and many of the shootouts in Stillwater this year will be one-sided.



SONY MICHEL & NICK CHUBB

15 GEORGIA

Bulldogs

If Kirby Smart suffered from any feelings of regret last year after leaving Alabama to take on the Bulldogs, he sure hasn't displayed any. He's too busy trying to turn last year's 4-1 finish into an SEC East Division title this season. With a bunch of skill players returning on offense, plenty of experienced defenders and a top-five recruiting class, Smart and Georgia should be able to make a good run at the crown.

That assumes the Dawgs will be able to score more easily than they did last year, when they topped 30 points just four times. One would anticipate the continued maturation of sophomore quarterback Jacob Eason, who completed just 55.1 percent of his throws last year. One would figure he will be better, so long as he can hold off the charge of true freshman Jake Fromm, whose spring performance was impressive.

Nobody's taking running back Nick Chubb's job, although Sony Michel is good enough to be the big man at just about every other FBS program. The Georgia linebackers are tough, too. The key this year is winning some big games; the Dawgs lost to Tennessee, Florida and Georgia Tech last year. Smart knows the Crimson Tide wouldn't do something like that.

16 FLORIDA

Gators

Gators fans who are still smiling after UF put up 30 on an Iowa in the Outback Bowl would be wise to pay more attention to Florida's previous five games, when they averaged 15.0 points and didn't once get past 20. Unless coach Jim McElwain can coax vastly better quarterback play from untested Feleipe Franks, expect more struggles on offense.

At least the offensive line will be stout. There should be some speed at receiver, too, especially Antonio Callaway. Last year's D was nasty — most of the time — but plenty of that talent moved on to the NFL, so Florida has to find eight new starters. The back seven should be sturdy, but up front might be a problem, and that's not what you want in the SEC. McElwain's first two years in Gainesville have been pretty successful, but Florida doesn't like participation trophies. With a three-way race among Florida, Georgia and Tennessee looming for the top of the East, McElwain needs to figure things out in a hurry.

17 STANFORD

Cardinal

Because the Cardinal have had so much success of late, it's easy to forget that Stanford was a push-over during the early part of the 21st century. The program has advanced so much that last year's 10-3 performance was considered something of a disappointment, and fans are hoping coach David Shaw will be able to "turn things around" in 2017.

He'll have to do it without amazing all-purpose phenomenon Christian McCaffrey, who will play running back, wideout, slot receiver and replay official in the NFL. Shaw might also have to do it, at least for a few games, without QB Keller Chryst, who tore his ACL in the bowl win over North Carolina. That could be a problem, because Ryan Burns was uninspiring early last year, and no other quarterback on the roster has taken a snap in a game.

But the Cardinal offensive line will be formidable, the defense stingy once again, and running back Bryce Love showed promise against the Tar Heels. Even if the Cardinal can't hang with Washington, they should again win 10 games or so, which is okay, we suppose.



BRYCE LOVE



LAMAR JACKSON

18 LOUISVILLE

Cardinals

When Cardinals fans think back on the 2016 season, they would rather remember the high times of the blowout win over Florida State, the team's 9-1 start and Lamar Jackson's near infallibility throughout September and October. Pushed to the deep recesses of their minds is the 0-3 finish.

Louisville can be spectacular once again, particularly if the offensive line can get it together. Jackson accounted for 5,114 total yards and 51 TDs last year while dashing away from angry pass rushers, so just imagine what might happen if he gets better blocking. The Cards lost a lot of skill people, but Jaylen Smith averaged 22.2 yards per catch last year, and freshman running back Colin Wilson is highly regarded.

The defense will be strong in the secondary but needs help up front. It may not matter, so long as Jackson and his mates can get rolling like they did during the high times last season.

19 TENNESSEE

Volunteers

Pay no attention to last year's 4-4 finish, Vols fans. This is a brand new season, and Team 121 has an established culture and a set of high expectations. UT has won 18 games the past two years, second only to Alabama and Florida in the SEC. Things are looking up, says coach Butch Jones.

We'll believe Jones — for now. But there are plenty of questions surrounding his team. Like how is new offensive coordinator Larry Scott — who has never called plays in a game before — going to fare? And what's the story at QB, where the strong-armed Quinten Dormady and redshirt freshman Jarrett Guarantano are battling to replace the great Joshua Dobbs? Skill weapons are gone. Last year's top sack man has departed, as has the main tackler.

But the Vols are not without positives. There are plenty, beginning with the fact that Jones has been in Knoxville for four seasons and has won nine games in each of the last two. He has recruited well and welcomes back eight of Tennessee's top nine tacklers, a solid running back in John Kelly and a potentially explosive wideout in Jauan Jennings. Last year may have ended a little shakily, but 2017 will be bright. Right, coach?

20 NOTRE DAME

Fighting Irish

So, Brian Kelly blames himself for last year's problems with mental toughness, conditioning and accountability. He spent the winter months rising at 4:30 a.m. to spend time with the players during their workouts and shed a bunch of weight himself.

Kelly is in a tough spot this year. He must reverse ND's 4-8 season, but he'll have to do so with an entirely untested QB — sophomore Brandon Winbush — and a defense that couldn't get to the passer or force turnovers last year.

There is, however, reason to believe a turnaround is in store. Only one of the losses was by more than one score, and four of the defeats came by three points or fewer. Notre Dame could have won seven or eight games with a little luck.

Moving forward, Notre Dame has new coordinators — Chip Long has made the move from Memphis on offense, and highly regarded Mike Elko was hired away from Wake Forest to run the defense. If those two moves pay off, and the Irish win some close games, don't be surprised to see this team bounce back in a big way.

21 OREGON

Ducks

No matter how beholden the Ducks are to big point totals and lots of yards, even they realize that teams have to play a little defense at times, and last year's ridiculously ineffective play on that side of the ball — which resulted in the program's worst record in 25 years — earned Mark Helfrich a ticket out of Eugene. New coach Willie Taggart, who has revitalized Western Kentucky and South Florida this decade, gets the next shot and has some interesting options available to him.

Quarterback Justin Herbert emerged last year as a strong passing weapon, but he'll need to show he can run the ball to thrive in Taggart's system. Senior running back Royce Freeman has no problems in that department and should produce big numbers, while Tony Brooks-James is a nice changeup in the backfield.

New coordinator Jim Leavitt turned around Colorado's D and hopes to turn a bunch of holdovers into a stingier unit. It may be asking too much for the Ducks to go from 4-8 to Pac-12 North champs, especially with Washington so potent, but expect Taggart to get the fun going again.



ROYCE FREEMAN

22 KANSAS STATE Wildcats

There are several things that should never surprise anybody about a Bill Snyder-led Wildcats team. KSU is going to run the ball. It will play tough defense. And Snyder isn't going to back down from anyone or anything, whether it is an opponent that is perceived to be superior or the ultimate personal rival, cancer.

Snyder has been fighting throat cancer since the end of 2016, and in typical fashion he has sought neither pity nor support. He's a football coach, and if an outside force attempts to disrupt his plans, look out.

Kansas State will again be under the sturdy hand of QB Jesse Ertz, an excellent runner (1,012 yards rushing, 12 TDs), who could stand to be a little more accurate throwing the ball. Three returning O-line starters and fullback Winston Dimel (12 TDs) assure that the power ground game will be in full force once again. The linebacking crew needs a little rejuvenation, but Kansas State will again play the kind of physical ball that stands out in the go-go Big 12. And Snyder will be right in the middle of it, no matter what challenges he's facing.



MARK WALTON

23 MIAMI Hurricanes

Every time a new coach takes over in Coral Gables, Hurricane fans begin to wonder whether he is the man to bring back the old habits of the U. Will the team be fast and brash? Can it replicate the mayhem of the '80s and early '90s? And what about Uncle Luke?

Mark Richt remembers all of that, because he was present at the creation in the early 1980s, and during his first year at the helm of his alma mater, he began re-casting the Canes in the image of their predecessors. Anybody who saw their bowl win over West Virginia recognized the outstanding speed, predatory defense and supreme confidence. That should continue this season, at least on defense. Miami made 108 tackles behind the line last year and returns nine starters from that unit, most notably an excellent corps of linebackers.

The question comes under center. Brad Kaaya's exit creates an interesting competition that Richt says won't be settled until the summer, when freshman N'Kosi Perry shows up to challenge Malik Rosier and Jack Allison. If the QB situation stabilizes, and the four returning offensive linemen pass protect better, Miami will be damn tough — 1980s tough.



QUINTON FLOWERS

24 SOUTH FLORIDA Bulls

Don't worry too much about Charlie Strong. He may have been ousted at Texas, but his Tampa landing spot is pretty comfortable, particularly if he and his staff can figure out how to curtail the Bulls' defensive generosity. The AAC isn't quite the Big 12, but Willie Taggart built a strong foundation at USF, so Strong should have no trouble reestablishing himself as a first-rate coach this season.

Strong will build the offense around QB Quinton Flowers, a dynamic runner and strong passer who accounted for 42 touchdowns last year. He needs some young receivers to develop, and Marlon Mack's early departure for the NFL raises expectations for running backs D'Ernest Johnson and Trevon Sands.

Then there is the defense, which was especially soft last season. The good news is that plenty of experience returns, even if those holdovers may have entered winter conditioning shell-shocked. The schedule is not onerous, and Flowers' presence assures that the Bulls will never be out of any game.

25 VIRGINIA TECH Hokies

Maybe Justin Fuente is just too good at developing quarterbacks. After getting Paxton Lynch ready to leave Memphis a year early, he coached up Jerod Evans, and after a mere one year of FBS play, the former junior college transfer headed to the NFL. Some wondered whether Evans made the right move, but it doesn't matter for the Hokies. He's gone.

Maybe redshirt freshman Josh Jackson can step in and lead the offense. Perhaps it will be another junior college newcomer, A.J. Bush. But after a 10-4 debut, Fuente needs someone to deliver under center. If that happens, Tech could be dangerous.

The back seven on defense is superb, although the Hokies have to rebuild their front four. It would be good if running back Travon McMillian bounced back from a disappointing 2016 campaign, and the young receiving corps has to mature in a hurry. The biggest onus is on Fuente, who must take an untested quarterback and make him productive. It would be great to have Evans around for another season, but that isn't happening. The feeling here is that it won't matter too much.

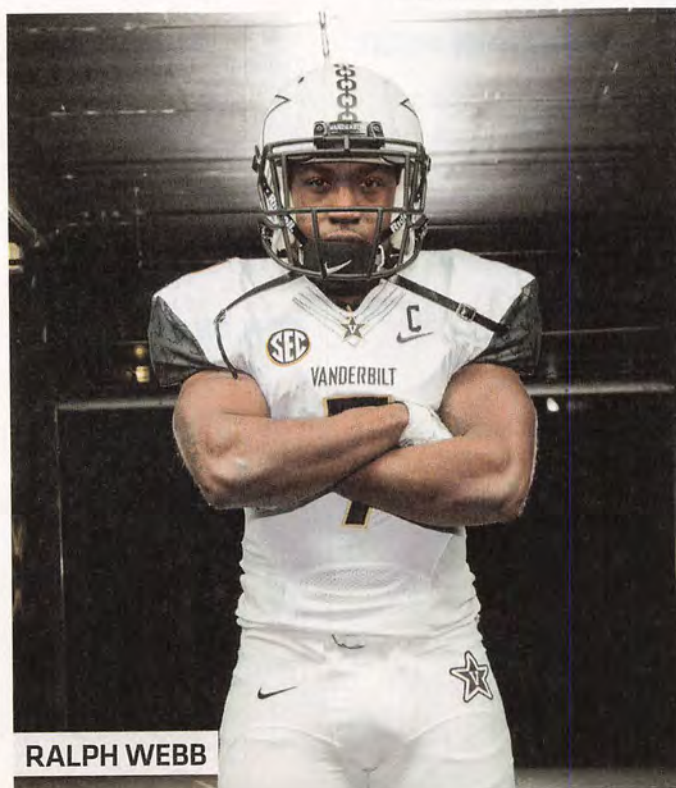
RANKING THE REST

- 26. West Virginia
- 27. NC State
- 28. Washington State
- 29. Arkansas
- 30. Mississippi State
- 31. Pittsburgh
- 32. TCU
- 33. UCLA
- 34. Colorado
- 35. Boise State
- 36. Georgia Tech
- 37. Texas A&M
- 38. Utah
- 39. BYU
- 40. South Carolina
- 41. Northwestern
- 42. North Carolina
- 43. Nebraska
- 44. Iowa
- 45. Kentucky
- 46. Ole Miss
- 47. Baylor
- 48. Vanderbilt
- 49. Michigan State
- 50. Minnesota
- 51. Memphis
- 52. Wake Forest
- 53. Arizona State
- 54. Indiana
- 55. Missouri
- 56. Navy
- 57. Maryland
- 58. Colorado State
- 59. Houston
- 60. Iowa State
- 61. San Diego State
- 62. Duke
- 63. Syracuse
- 64. Texas Tech
- 65. Oregon State
- 66. Arizona
- 67. Appalachian State
- 68. Troy
- 69. Toledo
- 70. Boston College
- 71. Louisiana Tech



JUSTIN CRAWFORD

- 72. Wyoming
- 73. WKU
- 74. Tulsa
- 75. Middle Tennessee
- 76. California
- 77. Air Force
- 78. Miami (Ohio)
- 79. UCF
- 80. Army
- 81. Temple
- 82. SMU
- 83. Western Michigan
- 84. Purdue
- 85. Ohio
- 86. Arkansas State
- 87. Virginia
- 88. Hawaii
- 89. Kansas
- 90. Old Dominion
- 91. Rutgers
- 92. Illinois
- 93. Southern Miss
- 94. UTSA
- 95. Cincinnati
- 96. New Mexico
- 97. Utah State
- 98. FAU
- 99. Northern Illinois
- 100. Tulane
- 101. UConn
- 102. Eastern Michigan
- 103. South Alabama
- 104. Idaho
- 105. UNLV
- 106. Central Michigan
- 107. Marshall
- 108. North Texas
- 109. Akron
- 110. Louisiana
- 111. Georgia Southern
- 112. East Carolina
- 113. FIU
- 114. Bowling Green
- 115. Nevada
- 116. Ball State
- 117. Fresno State
- 118. Rice
- 119. ULM
- 120. UTEP
- 121. Georgia State
- 122. San Jose State
- 123. Buffalo
- 124. Coastal Carolina
- 125. New Mexico State
- 126. Charlotte
- 127. Kent State
- 128. UMass
- 129. Texas State
- 130. UAB



RALPH WEBB

CONFERENCE PREDICTIONS

ACC

ATLANTIC

1. Florida State 12-1, 8-0
2. Clemson 10-2, 6-2
3. Louisville 9-3, 5-3
4. NC State 7-5, 4-4
5. Wake Forest 6-6, 3-5
6. Syracuse 5-7, 2-6
7. Boston College 5-7, 2-6

COASTAL

1. Miami 9-4, 5-3
2. Virginia Tech 9-3, 5-3
3. Pitt 7-5, 5-3
4. Georgia Tech 7-5, 4-4
5. North Carolina 7-5, 4-4
6. Duke 4-8, 2-6
7. Virginia 3-9, 1-7

ACC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Florida State over Miami

AMERICAN ATHLETIC

EAST

1. USF 12-1, 7-1
2. UCF 7-5, 5-3
3. Temple 6-6, 4-4
4. Cincinnati 4-8, 2-6
5. UConn 3-9, 2-6
6. East Carolina 3-9, 2-6

WEST

1. Memphis 9-4, 6-2
2. Navy 8-4, 5-3
3. Houston 7-5, 5-3
4. Tulsa 7-5, 5-3
5. SMU 6-6, 3-5
6. Tulane 4-8, 2-6

AAC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

USF over Memphis

BIG 12

1. Oklahoma 11-2, 8-1
2. Texas 9-4, 7-2
3. Oklahoma State 9-3, 6-3
4. Kansas State 8-4, 5-4
5. West Virginia 7-5, 5-4
6. TCU 7-5, 5-4
7. Baylor 6-6, 3-6
8. Iowa State 5-7, 3-6
9. Texas Tech 5-7, 3-6
10. Kansas 3-9, 0-9

BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Oklahoma over Texas

Records are projections for the 2017 season, overall and conference, through the regular season and conference championship games

BIG TEN

EAST

1. Ohio State 12-1, 8-1
2. Penn State 10-2, 7-2
3. Michigan 10-2, 7-2
4. Michigan State 6-6, 4-5
5. Indiana 7-5, 4-5
6. Maryland 6-6, 4-5
7. Rutgers 3-9, 1-8

WEST

1. Wisconsin 10-3, 7-2
2. Northwestern 8-4, 5-4
3. Nebraska 7-5, 5-4
4. Iowa 7-5, 4-5
5. Minnesota 6-6, 4-5
6. Purdue 3-9, 2-7
7. Illinois 2-10, 1-8

BIG TEN CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Ohio State over Wisconsin

CONFERENCE USA

EAST

1. WKU 9-4, 6-2
2. Middle Tennessee 7-5, 6-2
3. Old Dominion 7-5, 5-3
4. FAU 6-6, 4-4
5. Marshall 5-7, 4-4
6. FIU 5-7, 4-4
7. Charlotte 3-9, 1-7

WEST

1. Louisiana Tech 9-4, 6-2
2. Southern Miss 7-5, 5-3
3. UTSA 7-5, 5-3
4. North Texas 5-7, 3-5
5. Rice 3-9, 3-5
6. UTEP 3-9, 3-5
7. UAB 3-9, 1-7

C-USA CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Louisiana Tech over WKU

INDEPENDENTS

1. Notre Dame 8-4
2. BYU 9-4
3. Army 7-5
4. UMass 2-10

PAC-12

NORTH

1. Washington 12-1, 8-1
2. Stanford 9-3, 6-3
3. Oregon 8-4, 5-4
4. Washington State 8-4, 5-4
5. Oregon State 5-7, 3-6
6. California 3-9, 2-7

SOUTH

1. USC 11-2, 8-1
2. UCLA 7-5, 5-4
3. Colorado 7-5, 4-5
4. Utah 7-5, 4-5
5. Arizona State 5-7, 2-7
6. Arizona 5-7, 2-7

PAC-12 CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Washington over USC

SEC

EAST

1. Georgia 9-4, 6-2
2. Florida 8-4, 6-2
3. Tennessee 8-4, 4-4
4. South Carolina 6-6, 4-4
5. Kentucky 7-5, 4-4
6. Vanderbilt 6-6, 3-5
7. Missouri 5-7, 1-7

WEST

1. Alabama 12-1, 7-1
2. Auburn 9-3, 6-2
3. LSU 9-3, 5-3
4. Arkansas 7-5, 3-5
5. Mississippi State 7-5, 3-5
6. Texas A&M 7-5, 3-5
7. Ole Miss 5-7, 1-7

SEC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Alabama over Georgia

SUN BELT

1. Appalachian State 9-3, 7-1
2. Troy 9-3, 7-1
3. Arkansas State 7-5, 6-2
4. South Alabama 6-6, 5-3
5. Idaho 6-6, 4-4
6. Louisiana 5-7, 4-4
7. Georgia Southern 5-7, 4-4
8. ULM 4-8, 4-4
9. Georgia State 3-9, 2-6
10. Coastal Carolina 4-8, 2-6
11. New Mexico State 3-9, 2-6
12. Texas State 2-10, 1-7

2017 BOWL PROJECTIONS

ALAMO

Big 12 vs. Pac-12
Texas vs. Stanford

ARIZONA

Mountain West vs. Sun Belt
Wyoming vs. Idaho

ARMED FORCES

Army vs. Big Ten
Army vs. Minnesota

BAHAMAS

Conference USA vs. MAC
Southern Miss vs. Ohio

BELK

ACC vs. SEC
Louisville vs. Florida

BIRMINGHAM

American vs. SEC
Tulsa vs. Vanderbilt

BOCA RATON

American vs. Conference USA
UCF vs. Middle Tennessee

CACTUS

Big 12 vs. Pac-12
Kansas State vs. Utah

CAMELLIA

MAC vs. Sun Belt
Northern Illinois vs.
Arkansas State

CAMPING WORLD

ACC vs. Big 12
Notre Dame vs.
Oklahoma State

CITRUS

ACC/Big Ten vs. SEC
Miami vs. Georgia

CURE

American vs. Sun Belt
SMU vs. South Alabama

DOLLAR GENERAL

MAC vs. Sun Belt
Miami (Ohio) vs.
Appalachian State

FAMOUS IDAHO POTATO

MAC vs. Mountain West
Western Michigan vs.
San Diego State

FOSTER FARMS

Big Ten vs. Pac-12
Iowa vs. Washington State

HAWAII

American vs. Mountain West
Houston vs. Hawaii

HEART OF DALLAS

Conference USA vs. Big 12
UTSA vs. TCU

HOLIDAY

Big Ten vs. Pac-12
Northwestern vs.
Oregon

INDEPENDENCE

ACC vs. SEC
Pitt vs. Texas A&M

LAS VEGAS

Mountain West vs. Pac-12
Boise State vs.
Colorado

LIBERTY

Big 12 vs. SEC
West Virginia vs. South
Carolina

MIAMI BEACH

American vs. Sun Belt/MAC
Memphis vs. Toledo

MILITARY

ACC vs. American
Georgia Tech vs. Navy

MUSIC CITY

ACC/Big Ten vs. SEC
Indiana vs. Kentucky

NEW MEXICO

Conference USA vs.
Mountain West
BYU* vs. Colorado State

NEW ORLEANS

Conference USA vs. Sun Belt
Louisiana Tech vs. Troy

OUTBACK

Big Ten vs. SEC
Wisconsin vs. Tennessee

PINSTRIPE

ACC vs. Big Ten
North Carolina vs.
Nebraska

QUICK LANE

ACC vs. Big Ten
Wake Forest vs.
Michigan State

ST. PETERSBURG

American vs. Conference USA
Temple vs. WKU

SUN

ACC vs. Pac-12
NC State vs. UCLA

TAXSLAYER

ACC/Big Ten vs. SEC
Virginia Tech vs.
Mississippi State

TEXAS

Big 12 vs. SEC
Baylor vs. Arkansas

NEW YEAR'S SIX

CHICK-FIL-A

At-large vs. At-large
Auburn vs. USF

COTTON

At-large vs. At-large
Michigan vs. Oklahoma

FIESTA

At-large vs. At-large
LSU vs. USC

ORANGE

ACC vs. Big Ten/SEC/Notre Dame
Clemson vs. Penn State



BO SCARBROUGH, ALABAMA

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

National Semifinal

Rose Bowl

OHIO STATE VS. FLORIDA STATE

National Semifinal

Sugar Bowl

ALABAMA VS. WASHINGTON

National Championship

Rose Bowl winner vs. Sugar Bowl winner

ALABAMA VS. OHIO STATE

* BYU will fill one of Conference USA's bowl slots

ALL-AMERICA TEAM



DERRIUS GUICE, LSU

FIRST TEAM

OFFENSE

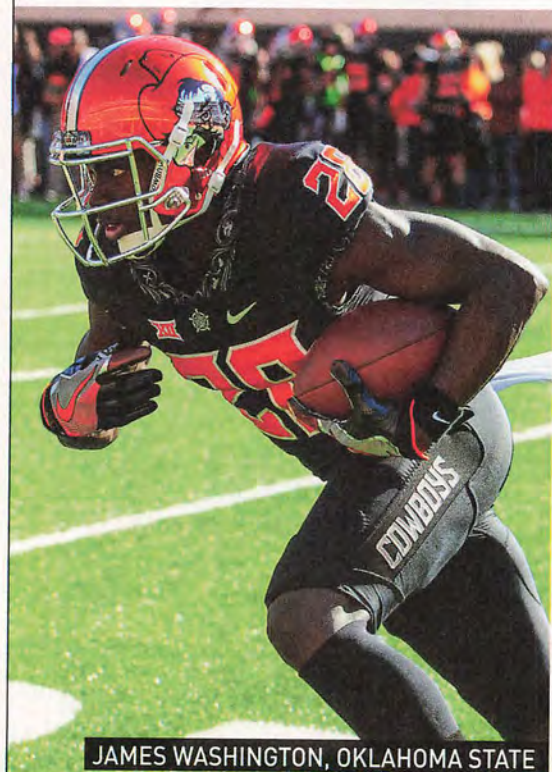
| | | | | | |
|----|------------------|------|-----|-----|------------------|
| QB | Baker Mayfield | 6-1 | 218 | Sr. | Oklahoma |
| RB | Saquon Barkley | 5-11 | 223 | Jr. | Penn State |
| RB | Derrius Guice | 5-11 | 212 | Jr. | LSU |
| AP | Jaylen Samuels | 5-11 | 223 | Sr. | NC State |
| WR | Christian Kirk | 5-11 | 200 | Jr. | Texas A&M |
| WR | James Washington | 6-0 | 205 | Sr. | Oklahoma State |
| TE | Troy Fumagalli | 6-6 | 249 | Sr. | Wisconsin |
| C | Frank Ragnow | 6-5 | 319 | Sr. | Arkansas |
| OL | Orlando Brown | 6-8 | 360 | Jr. | Oklahoma |
| OL | Cody O'Connell | 6-8 | 370 | Sr. | Washington State |
| OL | Braden Smith | 6-6 | 305 | Sr. | Auburn |
| OL | Connor Williams | 6-6 | 320 | Jr. | Texas |

DEFENSE

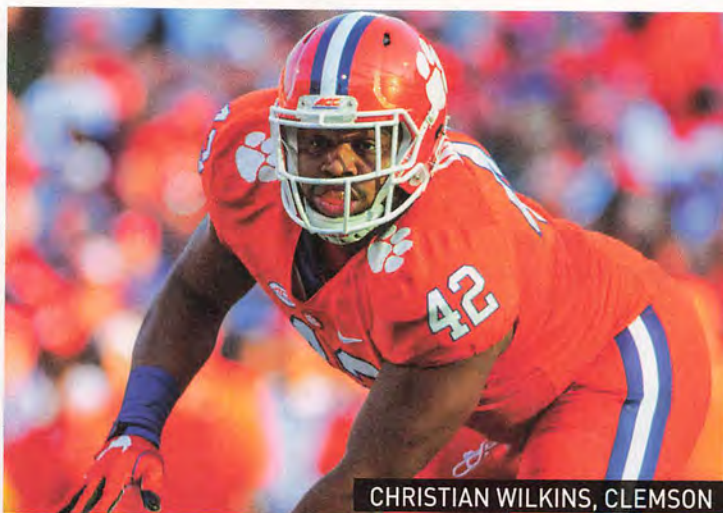
| | | | | | |
|----|--------------------|------|-----|-----|----------------|
| DL | Harold Landry | 6-3 | 250 | Sr. | Boston College |
| DL | Dexter Lawrence | 6-5 | 340 | So. | Clemson |
| DL | Ed Oliver | 6-2 | 290 | So. | Houston |
| DL | Christian Wilkins | 6-4 | 310 | Jr. | Clemson |
| LB | Arden Key | 6-6 | 238 | Jr. | LSU |
| LB | Josey Jewell | 6-2 | 236 | Sr. | Iowa |
| LB | Azeem Victor | 6-3 | 222 | Sr. | Washington |
| CB | Jaire Alexander | 5-11 | 192 | Jr. | Louisville |
| CB | Tarvarus McFadden | 6-2 | 198 | Jr. | Florida State |
| S | Minkah Fitzpatrick | 6-1 | 201 | Jr. | Alabama |
| S | Derwin James | 6-3 | 211 | So. | Florida State |

SPECIALISTS

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------|------|-----|-----|-----------|
| K | Daniel Carlson | 6-4 | 218 | Sr. | Auburn |
| P | Mitch Wishnowsky | 6-2 | 220 | Jr. | Utah |
| KR | Evan Berry | 5-11 | 207 | Sr. | Tennessee |
| PR | Christian Kirk | 5-11 | 200 | Jr. | Texas A&M |



JAMES WASHINGTON, OKLAHOMA STATE



CHRISTIAN WILKINS, CLEMSON

SECOND TEAM

OFFENSE

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------|------|-----|-----|------------------|
| QB | Sam Darnold | 6-4 | 225 | So. | USC |
| RB | Royce Freeman | 5-11 | 231 | Sr. | Oregon |
| RB | Kamryn Pettway | 6-0 | 237 | Jr. | Auburn |
| AP | Richie James | 5-9 | 178 | Jr. | Middle Tennessee |
| WR | Calvin Ridley | 6-1 | 190 | Jr. | Alabama |
| WR | Courtland Sutton | 6-4 | 218 | Jr. | SMU |
| TE | Mike Gesicki | 6-6 | 252 | Sr. | Penn State |
| C | Billy Price | 6-4 | 312 | Sr. | Ohio State |
| OL | Mitch Hyatt | 6-5 | 295 | Jr. | Clemson |
| OL | Mike McGlinchey | 6-8 | 312 | Sr. | Notre Dame |
| OL | Quenton Nelson | 6-5 | 329 | Sr. | Notre Dame |
| OL | Jonah Williams | 6-5 | 301 | So. | Alabama |

DEFENSE

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------|------|-----|-----|---------------|
| DL | Bradley Chubb | 6-4 | 275 | Sr. | NC State |
| DL | Maurice Hurst | 6-2 | 282 | Sr. | Michigan |
| DL | Tyquan Lewis | 6-4 | 265 | Sr. | Ohio State |
| DL | Vita Vea | 6-5 | 344 | Jr. | Washington |
| LB | Micah Kiser | 6-2 | 240 | Sr. | Virginia |
| LB | Tegray Scales | 6-0 | 230 | Sr. | Indiana |
| LB | Cameron Smith | 6-2 | 245 | Jr. | USC |
| CB | Duke Dawson | 5-10 | 208 | Sr. | Florida |
| CB | Greg Stroman | 6-0 | 180 | Sr. | Virginia Tech |
| S | Quin Blanding | 6-2 | 215 | Sr. | Virginia |
| S | Godwin Igwebuike | 6-0 | 205 | Sr. | Northwestern |

SPECIALISTS

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------|------|-----|-----|-----------------|
| K | Eddy Pineiro | 6-0 | 173 | So. | Florida |
| P | J.K. Scott | 6-6 | 204 | Sr. | Alabama |
| KR | Rashaad Penny | 5-11 | 220 | Sr. | San Diego State |
| PR | Dante Pettis | 6-1 | 192 | Sr. | Washington |

THIRD TEAM

OFFENSE

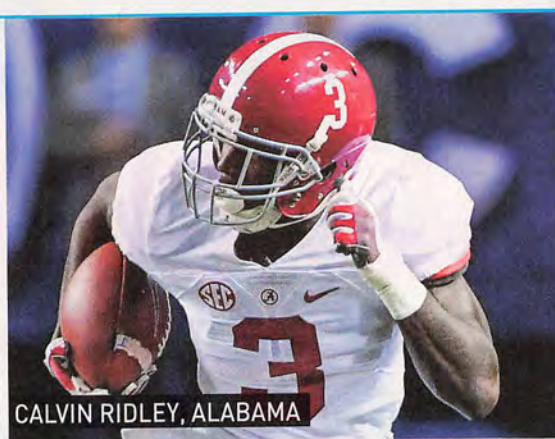
| | | | | | |
|----|-------------------|------|-----|-----|--------------|
| QB | Lamar Jackson | 6-3 | 200 | Jr. | Louisville |
| RB | Nick Chubb | 5-10 | 228 | Sr. | Georgia |
| RB | Justin Jackson | 5-11 | 193 | Sr. | Northwestern |
| AP | Quadree Henderson | 5-8 | 190 | Jr. | Pittsburgh |
| WR | Allen Lazard | 6-5 | 223 | Sr. | Iowa State |
| WR | Dante Pettis | 6-1 | 192 | Sr. | Washington |
| TE | Adam Breneman | 6-4 | 250 | Sr. | UMass |
| C | Mason Cole | 6-5 | 305 | Sr. | Michigan |
| OL | Trey Adams | 6-8 | 320 | Jr. | Washington |
| OL | Will Hernandez | 6-3 | 330 | Sr. | UTEP |
| OL | Brian O'Neill | 6-6 | 300 | Jr. | Pittsburgh |
| OL | Sean Welsh | 6-3 | 295 | Sr. | Iowa |

DEFENSE

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|---------------|
| DL | Dorance Armstrong Jr. | 6-4 | 246 | Jr. | Kansas |
| DL | Marquis Haynes | 6-3 | 225 | Sr. | Ole Miss |
| DL | Da'Ron Payne | 6-2 | 308 | Jr. | Alabama |
| DL | Trent Thompson | 6-4 | 295 | Jr. | Georgia |
| LB | Jerome Baker | 6-1 | 225 | Jr. | Ohio State |
| LB | Tremaine Edmunds | 6-5 | 236 | Jr. | Virginia Tech |
| LB | Jordan Jones | 6-2 | 221 | Jr. | Kentucky |
| CB | Quenton Meeks | 6-2 | 204 | Jr. | Stanford |
| CB | Jordan Thomas | 6-0 | 186 | Sr. | Oklahoma |
| S | Marcus Allen | 6-2 | 202 | Sr. | Penn State |
| S | Ronnie Harrison | 6-3 | 214 | Jr. | Alabama |

SPECIALISTS

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|--------------|
| K | Gary Wunderlich | 6-0 | 193 | Sr. | Ole Miss |
| P | Michael Dickson | 6-3 | 205 | Jr. | Texas |
| KR | Byron Pringle | 6-2 | 205 | Jr. | Kansas State |
| PR | KaVontae Turpin | 5-9 | 153 | Jr. | TCU |



CALVIN RIDLEY, ALABAMA



BRADLEY CHUBB, NC STATE



QUADREE HENDERSON, PITTSBURGH



JEROME BAKER, OHIO STATE

THE 17TH ANNUAL ATHLON AWARDS



LAMAR JACKSON

ATLANTIC COAST

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|----------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 14 | 6 | 12 | 11 | 5 | 8 | 10 |
| CLEMSON | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| DUKE | 6 | 11 | 8 | 9 | 13 | 6 | 14 |
| FLORIDA STATE | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| GEORGIA TECH | 9 | 3 | 14 | 4 | 11 | 12 | 5 |
| LOUISVILLE | 1 | 8 | 2 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 4 |
| MIAMI | 10 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| NORTH CAROLINA | 11 | 13 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 11 | 6 |
| NC STATE | 5 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 9 |
| PITTSBURGH | 7 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 13 | 8 |
| SYRACUSE | 3 | 12 | 7 | 12 | 14 | 7 | 12 |
| VIRGINIA | 12 | 14 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 9 | 13 |
| VIRGINIA TECH | 8 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| WAKE FOREST | 13 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 7 | 14 | 11 |

AMERICAN

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|---------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| CINCINNATI | 9 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 8 | 9 | 9 |
| CONNECTICUT | 12 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 6 | 2 | 10 |
| EAST CAROLINA | 8 | 12 | 4 | 7 | 12 | 10 | 6 |
| HOUSTON | 3 | 11 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| MEMPHIS | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 7 |
| NAVY | 5 | 7 | 12 | 3 | 11 | 3 | 11 |
| SMU | 4 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| TEMPLE | 11 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 1 |
| TULANE | 10 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 5 | 12 | 3 |
| TULSA | 7 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| UCF | 6 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 8 |
| USF | 1 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 |



ED OLIVER

BIG 12

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|----------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| BAYLOR | 7 | 3 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| IOWA STATE | 9 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 7 |
| KANSAS | 10 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 10 | 10 |
| KANSAS STATE | 3 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 3 |
| OKLAHOMA | 1 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| OKLAHOMA STATE | 2 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| TCU | 6 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| TEXAS | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| TEXAS TECH | 8 | 9 | 2 | 9 | 10 | 6 | 9 |
| WEST VIRGINIA | 4 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 5 |



ORLANDO BROWN

Jackson: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Oliver: Houston Athletics; Oklahoma: Chris Covatta; Jewell: Tom Lynn; Stockstill: MTSU Athletics; Reid: Miami Athletics

BIG TEN

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|----------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| ILLINOIS | 12 | 13 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 13 |
| INDIANA | 7 | 14 | 2 | 7 | 10 | 4 | 5 |
| IOWA | 10 | 8 | 11 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 8 |
| MARYLAND | 11 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 7 |
| MICHIGAN | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 9 |
| MICHIGAN STATE | 9 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| MINNESOTA | 13 | 5 | 13 | 10 | 11 | 8 | 11 |
| NEBRASKA | 8 | 10 | 10 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 3 |
| NORTHWESTERN | 4 | 3 | 4 | 11 | 6 | 12 | 4 |
| OHIO STATE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| PENN STATE | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| PURDUE | 5 | 11 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 14 |
| RUTGERS | 14 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 13 | 12 |
| WISCONSIN | 6 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 |



JOSEY JEWELL

CONFERENCE USA

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|------------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| CHARLOTTE | 8 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| FAU | 7 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 10 | 9 |
| FIU | 5 | 6 | 7 | 12 | 9 | 3 | 8 |
| LOUISIANA TECH | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 11 |
| MARSHALL | 4 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 7 | 5 | 3 |
| MIDDLE TENNESSEE | 1 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 10 | 2 | 7 |
| NORTH TEXAS | 10 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 7 | 2 |
| OLD DOMINION | 12 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 14 | 4 |
| RICE | 13 | 10 | 11 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 13 |
| SOUTHERN MISS | 11 | 2 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 11 | 5 |
| UAB | 14 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 14 |
| UTEP | 9 | 14 | 12 | 3 | 13 | 9 | 10 |
| UTSA | 6 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| WKU | 2 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 1 |



BRENT STOCKSTILL

MID-AMERICAN

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|-------------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| AKRON | 4 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 12 | 7 | 10 |
| BALL STATE | 6 | 2 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 12 | 11 |
| BOWLING GREEN | 5 | 9 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 12 |
| BUFFALO | 9 | 11 | 12 | 6 | 11 | 5 | 9 |
| CENTRAL MICHIGAN | 12 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 7 |
| EASTERN MICHIGAN | 3 | 5 | 1 | 11 | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| KENT STATE | 8 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 8 | 11 | 3 |
| MIAMI | 2 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| NORTHERN ILLINOIS | 10 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 9 | 4 |
| OHIO | 7 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| TOLEDO | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| WESTERN MICHIGAN | 11 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 |



TONY REID



RASHAAD PENNY

PAC-12

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|------------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| ARIZONA | 10 | 9 | 12 | 6 | 12 | 12 | 10 |
| ARIZONA STATE | 9 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 12 |
| CALIFORNIA | 12 | 10 | 4 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| COLORADO | 7 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 6 |
| OREGON | 5 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 7 |
| OREGON STATE | 11 | 7 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 9 | 9 |
| STANFORD | 8 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 1 |
| UCLA | 4 | 12 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| USC | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| UTAH | 6 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 8 |
| WASHINGTON | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| WASHINGTON STATE | 3 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 5 |



QUENTON MECKS

SOUTHEASTERN

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|-------------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| ALABAMA | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| ARKANSAS | 3 | 4 | 11 | 6 | 12 | 12 | 10 |
| AUBURN | 2 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| FLORIDA | 13 | 10 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| GEORGIA | 5 | 2 | 8 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| KENTUCKY | 12 | 9 | 14 | 4 | 14 | 5 | 6 |
| LSU | 11 | 5 | 12 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| MISSOURI | 8 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 13 | 14 |
| MISSISSIPPI STATE | 4 | 13 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 7 | 13 |
| OLE MISS | 6 | 14 | 4 | 10 | 7 | 14 | 12 |
| SOUTH CAROLINA | 7 | 11 | 2 | 14 | 8 | 8 | 7 |
| TENNESSEE | 10 | 12 | 13 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 9 |
| TEXAS A&M | 14 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 11 |
| VANDERBILT | 9 | 6 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 11 | 8 |



BO SCARBROUGH

SUN BELT

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|-------------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| APPALACHIAN STATE | 3 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| ARKANSAS STATE | 4 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| COASTAL CAROLINA | 12 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| GEORGIA STATE | 7 | 11 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| GEORGIA SOUTHERN | 11 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 6 |
| IDAHO | 2 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 8 |
| LOUISIANA | 10 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 12 | 7 |
| NEW MEXICO STATE | 9 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 11 | 7 | 10 |
| SOUTH ALABAMA | 8 | 6 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| TEXAS STATE | 6 | 12 | 9 | 11 | 12 | 3 | 11 |
| TROY | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 2 |
| ULM | 5 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 9 |



JORDAN CHUNN

NATIONAL UNIT RANKINGS

QUARTERBACKS

1. Oklahoma
2. USC
3. Louisville
4. Ohio State
5. Washington
6. Oklahoma State
7. Washington State
8. USF
9. Penn State
10. Alabama

RUNNING BACKS

1. Alabama
2. Georgia
3. Penn State
4. Florida State
5. Auburn
6. Arkansas
7. LSU
8. Washington
9. Ohio State
10. Oregon

RECEIVERS

1. Oklahoma State
2. Clemson
3. Penn State
4. Florida
5. Colorado
6. South Carolina
7. Alabama
8. Ole Miss
9. Texas Tech
10. Louisville



OFFENSIVE LINE

1. Alabama
2. Oklahoma
3. Clemson
4. Auburn
5. LSU
6. Iowa
7. Washington
8. Kansas State
9. Ohio State
10. Notre Dame

DEFENSIVE LINE

- 1. Clemson**
2. Ohio State
3. Alabama
4. Florida State
5. Michigan
6. Miami
7. NC State
8. Washington
9. Georgia
10. Texas

LINEBACKERS

1. Georgia
2. Alabama
3. Iowa
4. Virginia Tech
5. Washington
6. Ohio State
7. TCU
8. USC
9. Wisconsin
10. Stanford

DEFENSIVE BACKS

1. Alabama
2. Florida State
3. Stanford
4. Georgia
5. Virginia Tech
6. Florida
7. LSU
8. Ohio State
9. Auburn
10. Clemson

EXTRA POINTS

TOP QB BATTLES

ARIZONA STATE No team was hit harder by injuries at the quarterback position than Arizona State in 2016. Coach Todd Graham was forced to utilize three different starters, and a fourth (Bryce Perkins) was lost before the season due to injury. As a result of the injuries, the Sun Devils did not average more than 30 points in Pac-12 games for the first time since 2009. Manny Wilkins started 10 games and led the team with 2,329 passing yards and 12 scores. Dillon Sterling-Cole and Brady White both made one start last season, but both struggled in their first extended action. Joining the competition is former five-star recruit Blake Barnett. He transferred from Alabama after losing the starting job last season and played in Tuscaloosa under new Sun Devils coordinator Billy Napier. Barnett has only three games of experience, but he's the most talented quarterback on the roster.

Projected Winner: Barnett

BAYLOR Baylor's high-powered offense is undergoing an offseason makeover under new coach Matt Rhule. Co-coordinators Glenn Thomas and Jeff Nixon plan to mesh up-tempo spread principles with some of the pro-style elements Rhule used at Temple. Sophomore Zach Smith got an early start on claiming the job after Seth Russell suffered a season-ending leg injury in mid-November. Smith was just 1-3 as a starter but finished 2016 with 1,526 passing yards and 13 scores. He's the frontrunner to start, with Arizona graduate transfer Anu Solomon and true freshman Charlie Brewer competing for snaps. Injuries plagued Solomon over his last two years with the Wildcats, but he accumulated 7,359 yards of total offense and 54 total scores in Tucson.

Projected Winner: Smith

CLEMSON After leading Clemson to its first national championship since 1981, Deshaun Watson leaves enormous shoes to fill. The Tigers won't be able to replicate the leadership and overall production Watson provided over the last three years, but coach Dabo Swinney has recruited this position as well as any team in the nation. Junior Kelly Bryant worked as Watson's backup over the last two seasons and completed 13-of-18 passes for 75 yards and one score. He also showcased his mobility with 178 yards on just 35 carries. But Bryant is far from locked

into the starting job. Redshirt freshman Zerrick Cooper ranked as the No. 7 dual-threat quarterback in the 2016 signing class, and incoming freshman Hunter Johnson was a highly coveted five-star prospect. Johnson enrolled in time to compete in spring ball and made a late push for the starting job. Bryant may begin 2017 as the starter, but Johnson could eventually emerge as the team's best quarterback.

Projected Winner: Bryant

FLORIDA Considering the firepower this program possessed under former coaches Steve Spurrier and Urban Meyer, it's a surprise Florida has not finished higher than seventh in the SEC in scoring (conference games) since 2010. Jim McElwain's first two years resulted in East Division titles, but the Gators have struggled to find consistent quarterback play. Austin Appleby and Luke Del Rio struggled to connect on big plays, landing only seven passes of 40 yards or more. Appleby has used up his eligibility, and Del Rio is recovering from offseason shoulder surgery. Redshirt freshmen Feleipe Franks and Kyle Trask are the front-runners, with true freshman Kadarius Toney emerging as a change-of-pace option. There will be growing pains, but Franks has the accuracy and arm strength to give Florida's passing game a needed boost.

Projected Winner: Franks

KENTUCKY The Wildcats earned their first bowl trip under coach Mark Stoops last season, but for this program to make another move, more consistency is needed in the passing game. Drew Barker was a key in-state pickup for Stoops and was poised to handle the full-time job after Patrick Towles transferred to Boston College last year. However, Barker suffered a back injury after



KELLY BRYANT

the third game, forcing junior college recruit Stephen Johnson into the starting lineup. Johnson was dangerous on the ground but was inconsistent as a passer (54.7 percent). Johnson, who guided Kentucky to seven wins in 11 games, emerged as the frontrunner for the job with a strong performance in the spring.

Projected Winner: Johnson

MARYLAND Offensive coordinator Walt Bell is a rising star in the coaching ranks, but he will have his hands full this offseason. Perry Hills has departed after throwing for 1,464 yards and 12 scores last year, leaving five candidates vying for the starting job. Sophomore Tyrrell Pigrome played in 11 games last season and is the most mobile option of the bunch. However, Pigrome is still developing as a passer. Sophomore Max Bortenschlager made one start in 2016 and finished the year with 209 yards and one score on 16 completions. North Carolina transfer Caleb Henderson was rated as a four-star recruit out of high school and is eligible after sitting out 2016. Junior college transfer Ryan Brand and incoming freshman Kasim Hill round out the contenders. Henderson's passing ability should be enough to earn a slight edge on the starting job, with Hill the wild-card option.

Projected Winner: Henderson

Bryant: AP; Chryst: Peter Brouillet



KELLER CHRYST

MIAMI Brad Kaaya's steady play over the last three years won't be easy to replace. However, Mark Richt has a strong track record in developing quarterbacks, and the Hurricanes have some intriguing options. Junior Malik Rosier worked as Kaaya's backup over the last two years and made one start in 2015. The Alabama native is more mobile than Kaaya but has completed only 50.1 percent of his throws. Pushing Rosier for the job is sophomore Evan Shirreffs, junior Vincent Testaverde and three freshmen. N'Kosi Perry and Cade Weldon were part of the 2017 class, while Jack Allison is ready to push for snaps after a redshirt year. Rosier could begin 2017 as the starter, but this job may change hands during the year.

Projected Winner: Rosier

MICHIGAN STATE Life after Connor Cook was difficult for the Spartans last season. The offense finished 12th in the Big Ten in averaging only 24.1 points per game and failed to eclipse more than 200 passing yards in six contests. Tyler O'Connor started nine games in 2016 and was pressed for the job by Brian Lewerke before he suffered a season-ending injury in late October. O'Connor has graduated, leaving Lewerke with a slight edge over Damion Terry and redshirt freshman Messiah deWeaver for the job. Lewerke completed 31-of-57 passes for 381 yards and two touchdowns last year. Terry's dual-threat potential could allow the Spartans to use him in a change-of-pace role.

Projected Winner: Lewerke

MINNESOTA Finding a quarterback is new coach P.J. Fleck's top priority this offseason, and the Golden Gophers have a cast of inexperienced options vying for the starting job. Former walk-on Conor Rhoda made one start in 2016 but has only 17 career pass attempts. Redshirt freshman

Seth Green was rated a three-star recruit in the 2016 signing class but has yet to attempt a pass in college. Sophomore Demry Croft played in three games in 2015 but used last season as a redshirt year. Rhoda's experience gives him an early advantage until one of the young quarterbacks develops.

Projected Winner: Rhoda

NEBRASKA Tommy Armstrong had a successful four-year run as Nebraska's starter, but the two quarterbacks competing for the job this offseason — Tanner Lee and Patrick O'Brien — are a better fit for coach Mike Riley's offense. Lee was Tulane's starting quarterback in 2014-15 and threw for 3,601 yards and 23 scores. He's more of a traditional drop-back passer. O'Brien is cut from the same mold and represents the future of the program. The four-star recruit from California redshirted in his first year on campus. This battle is expected to go deep into the fall.

Projected Winner: Lee

NORTH CAROLINA Mitch Trubisky's early departure left a big void under center for coach Larry Fedora. Last year's backup Nathan Elliott opened spring as the No. 1 option, but he's attempted only nine passes in limited action. Redshirt freshmen Chazz Surratt and Logan Byrd had an extended look in the spring, but Fedora added competition in March with former LSU signal-caller Brandon Harris. The Louisiana native was rated a four-star recruit out of the high school ranks and started 15 games in three years with the Tigers. Despite throwing for 2,756 yards and 20 scores, Harris struggled to reach his potential or develop into a consistent passer. Assuming Harris quickly picks up the offense this summer, he should take the first snap in 2017.

Projected Winner: Harris

STANFORD Keller Chryst went 6-0 as Stanford's starter last season, but a knee injury in the Sun Bowl clouded the quarterback position on the Farm this offseason. Chryst faced an easier slate of defenses than previous starter Ryan Burns battled through the first seven contests, but Chryst provided a spark to the passing game. Additionally, the Cardinal averaged 37.2 points in Chryst's six games, compared to 17.0 per contest under Burns. Burns considered leaving as a graduate transfer but decided to remain with the program. Redshirt freshman K.J. Costello got an extended look in the spring, and five-star recruit Davis Mills arrives this summer. Chryst is expected to regain the starting job if he's 100 percent healthy by the fall.

Projected Winner: Chryst

TENNESSEE Joshua Dobbs' prolific career is over, but the Volunteers aren't hurting at quarterback. Quinten Dormady worked as the backup to Dobbs over the last two years, completing 24-of-39 throws for 357 yards and one touchdown. The junior isn't as mobile as Dobbs but is regarded as a better pocket passer. Dormady will have a tough time holding off redshirt freshman Jarrett Guarantano, who ranked as the No. 1 dual-threat quarterback in the 2016 signing class. Expect Dormady to get the start Week 1 against Georgia Tech, but Guarantano — who is the better long-term prospect — figures to work his way into the lineup at some point next fall.

Projected Winner: Dormady

TEXAS A&M Uncertainty surrounds the quarterback position in College Station for the fourth consecutive offseason. Senior Jake Hubenak has three career starts and passed for 884 yards and six scores in seven appearances last year. However, Hubenak will be pushed for time by redshirt freshman Nick Starkel and true freshman Kellen Mond. Starkel was rated a three-star prospect in the 2016 class, while Mond was regarded as one of the top dual-threat quarterbacks. Hubenak and Starkel likely have a better grasp of the system, but Mond enrolled in time to compete for spring ball.

Projected Winner: Mond

VIRGINIA TECH Justin Fuente is quickly emerging as one of the nation's top quarterback coaches. He developed TCU's Andy Dalton into a second-round pick and later transformed Paxton Lynch from an unheralded two-star recruit at Memphis into a first-round NFL Draft pick. In Fuente's first year at Virginia Tech, he helped Jerod Evans go from junior college recruit to one of the ACC's top quarterbacks, and Evans decided to leave early for the NFL. Redshirt freshman Josh Jackson is the frontrunner, but Fuente added competition in the 2017 signing class. Junior college transfer (and former Nebraska Husker) A.J. Bush and true freshman Hendon Hooker arrived in time to compete in spring ball.

Projected Winner: Jackson

10 OTHERS TO WATCH (and projected starters)

Arizona: Brandon Dawkins
Boston College: Anthony Brown
California: Chase Forrest
Illinois: Chayce Crouch
Oregon State: Jake Luton
Rutgers: Giovanni Rescigno
Temple: Logan Marchi
Tulsa: Luke Skipper
Wake Forest: Kendall Hinton
Western Michigan: Tom Flacco

CONFERENCE RANKINGS

1. SEC

For the first time in recent memory, you could make a legitimate argument last season that the SEC was not the best conference in college football. That was last year. Moving forward, the league should reclaim its spot as the unquestioned king of the sport, thanks to the continued dominance of Alabama and the expected re-emergence of Auburn and LSU in 2017. It's still too early to anoint any team from the SEC East as a legitimate threat to crack the national elite, but Georgia is recruiting at an Alabama-like level, Florida has won 19 games in two seasons under Jim McElwain, and Tennessee still has a roster stacked with talent.

Favorite: Alabama

2. ACC

Life was good in 2016 for the ACC. Consider the following: The league produced a national champion (and that champion, Clemson, shut out Ohio State and knocked off Alabama en route to the title); an ACC player won the Heisman Trophy (Louisville's Lamar Jackson); a team that finished 5-3 in league games (Pittsburgh) was good enough to beat the national champion (Clemson) as well as the champion from the Big Ten (Penn State); and ACC teams went a combined 8-3 in bowl games. That's pretty impressive stuff. Still, we aren't quite ready to crown the ACC as the No. 1 league in the nation. Florida State is a legitimate national title contender, and we have learned never to count out Clemson — no matter how many key players it loses. But there doesn't look like a top-10 team beyond the Big 2. Louisville, Miami and Virginia Tech are top-25-caliber teams, but the ACC in 2017 won't be quite as deep as it was a year ago.

Favorite: Florida State

3. BIG TEN

The rise of the Big Ten East has elevated the league's profile in recent years. Michigan State has taken a step back, but Penn State's emergence has given this division three teams — along with Ohio State and Michigan, of course — that look to be capable of making the College Football Playoff in any given season. The West has been a punchline in recent years, but Wisconsin has proven it has staying power under Paul Chryst, and two schools in the division made tremendous hires in the offseason — Purdue (Jeff Brohm) and Minnesota (P.J. Fleck). It's the bottom half of the league — which contains too many bad teams — that prevents the Big Ten from challenging the SEC and ACC for conference supremacy.

Favorite: Ohio State



SEC CHAMPION ALABAMA

4. PAC-12

There are two teams with legitimate CFB Playoff aspirations — Washington and USC. Beyond that, the Pac-12 is loaded with good but hardly great teams. Stanford is Stanford (and that's a compliment); Oregon should be much improved under Willie Taggart but is far from elite; UCLA has plenty of talent but can't be trusted; Utah lost a lot of talent but can always be trusted; Colorado is eager to prove it wasn't a one-hit wonder; and Washington State is fun to watch but can't be considered a threat to win the league.

Favorite: Washington

5. BIG 12

No Power 5 league has slipped further in its standing in recent years than the Big 12. Oklahoma has remained relevant on the national scene, but it's hard to find another program that is considered elite at this point. Oklahoma State has been a consistent winner but has been in the national title conversation only once during its recent run of success. The Big 12's biggest issue: Texas. It's tough to see the league making a move up the college football food chain until the Horns re-emerge as a national power.

Favorite: Oklahoma

6. AMERICAN

It was a difficult offseason for the AAC, which lost three of its top coaches to Power 5 schools — Matt Rhule (Temple to Baylor), Tom Herman (Houston to Texas) and Willie Taggart (USF to Oregon). This is still a really good "mid-major" league with some quality teams, but we can stop the talk of the AAC forcing the college football world to change Power 5 to Power 6.

Favorite: USF

7. MOUNTAIN WEST

Four teams went 6-2 in the Mountain West last season, and all four teams had a really bad non-conference loss on their résumés. Boise State dropped a 31-12 decision in the Cactus Bowl to a Baylor team that had lost its previous six games; San Diego State and New Mexico lost to teams that went 2-6 in the Sun Belt (South Alabama and New Mexico State, respectively); and Wyoming lost to Eastern Michigan. Not a good look.

Favorite: Boise State

8. CONFERENCE USA

The bottom of this league continues to be a mess, but there are some really solid programs at the top, most notably Louisiana Tech, Western Kentucky and Middle Tennessee. Keep an eye on UTSA. The Roadrunners surprised a year ago, and Frank Wilson continues to upgrade the talent.

Favorite: Louisiana Tech

9. MAC

The MAC's biggest problem is a lack of balance between the two divisions. You could make an argument that the fifth-place team in the West last year (Central Michigan) was better than the East champion (Ohio). (That argument is made more compelling by the fact that CMU beat Ohio, 27-20.)

Favorite: Toledo

10. SUN BELT

Appalachian State and Arkansas State, who are both 20-4 in league games in the last three seasons, continue to rule the Sun Belt conference. The league welcomes Coastal Carolina from the FCS ranks this fall. Don't be surprised if the Chanticleers become a factor in the next few years.

Favorite: Appalachian State

HEISMAN TROPHY CONTENDERS

1. BAKER MAYFIELD, QB, OKLAHOMA

Mayfield's amazing numbers from the 2016 season — 3,965 passing yards, a 70.9 percent completion rate, a 40-to-8 touch-down-to-interception ratio, 11.1 yards per passing attempt — put him at the top of the Heisman heap heading into 2017. He could end his career as one of college football's all-time greats.

2. SAM DARNOLD, QB, USC

Darnold's Rose Bowl performance as a redshirt freshman — 453 passing yards and five TDs in a thrilling win over Penn State — set the college football world abuzz and vaulted him to the top of many preseason Heisman lists. And he wasn't a one-game wonder; Darnold was great from the time he took the reins for the Trojans in late September.

3. LAMAR JACKSON, QB, LOUISVILLE

The reigning Heisman winner is almost an afterthought entering the 2017 season following a struggling finish to 2016, but he remains college football's pre-eminent dual threat at the position after averaging 272.5 passing yards and 120.9 rushing yards per game in Bobby Petrino's high-octane attack.

4. SAQUON BARKLEY, RB, PENN STATE

He might end up splitting votes with fellow honors candidate Trace McSorley, the Lions' quarterback, but Barkley will take a back seat to no one following a season that produced 1,898 yards from scrimmage and 22 total touchdowns.

5. J.T. BARRETT, QB, OHIO STATE

It seems like Barrett has been a Buckeye since the days of Archie Griffin. He returns for the final chapter of his storied OSU career looking to forge a legacy that could include more Heisman hardware for the Buckeye trophy case.

6. DERRIUS GUICE, RB, LSU

Leonard Fournette got the preseason hype, but Guice was the Tigers' top back in 2016. In his last four games, he averaged 189.5 rushing yards with nine total TDs, finishing the season with 1,387 rushing yards. The LSU offense will revolve around Guice in 2017.

7. JAKE BROWNING, QB, WASHINGTON

Browning led the Huskies to the College Football Playoff as a sophomore, throwing for 3,430 yards and 43 touchdowns with only nine interceptions. Washington might take a small step back, but another season of playoff contention would make Browning hard to ignore come Heisman time.

8. JARRETT STIDHAM, QB, AUBURN

The Baylor transfer immediately transforms the Tigers into SEC West contenders. If he lives up to the hype — which, admittedly, is a big if — he could work his way into Heisman contention.

9. MASON RUDOLPH, QB, OKLAHOMA STATE

In a season with a seemingly bottomless well of QB talent, Rudolph is as good as anyone in the nation. As a junior, the South Carolina native threw for 4,091 yards with 28 touchdowns and only four interceptions for the 10-win Cowboys.

10. BO SCARBROUGH, RB, ALABAMA

Scarborough, who started only two games, was at his best late in the season when he rushed for a combined 444 yards and six touchdowns on 63 carries (7.2 per rush) against Auburn, Florida, Washington and Clemson. The key: staying healthy — something he was unable to do during his sophomore season.

11. NICK CHUBB, RB, GEORGIA

Chubb's junior season got off to a great start when he rushed for 222 yards on 32 carries in the Bulldogs' win over North Carolina. He topped 100 yards only four times in the remaining 12 games. Another cause for concern: He averaged only 5.0 yards per carry, down from 7.1 as a freshman and 8.1 during an injury-shortened sophomore season.

12. LUKE FALK, QB, WASHINGTON STATE

Falk was brilliant as a junior, ranking second in the nation in completion percentage (70.0) while averaging 343.7 passing yards per game. If Washington State contended in the Pac-12 North, Falk could climb into serious Heisman contention.

13. JOSH ROSEN, QB, UCLA

Rosen is one of the most talented quarterbacks in the nation, but he has yet to become as a star in college — due to inconsistency as a freshman and injury as a sophomore. He could put it all together in what figures to be his final season in college.



BAKER MAYFIELD

14. DEONDRE FRANCOIS, QB, FLORIDA STATE

Francois could emerge as one of the nation's top players as a sophomore on a team that should compete for a national title. After completing a combined 45.3 percent of his attempts against Louisville, Clemson, Florida and Michigan, he'll need to be more efficient against top competition.

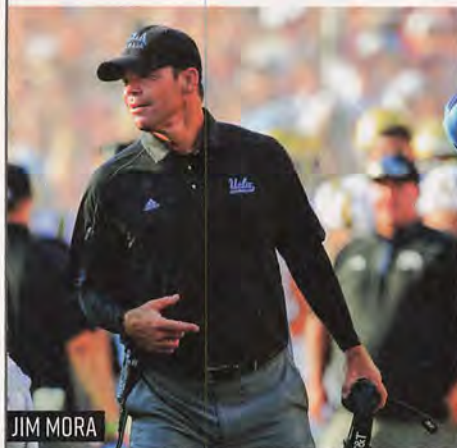
15. TRACE MCSORLEY, QB, PENN STATE

The lightly recruited McSorley — who was originally committed to play for James Franklin at Vanderbilt — was one of the biggest surprises in college football in 2016. He threw for 300-plus yards five times and led the Big Ten with 9.3 yards per passing attempt.

10 OTHERS TO WATCH

16. Quinton Flowers, QB, South Florida
17. Kamryn Pettway, RB, Auburn
18. Jalen Hurts, QB, Alabama
19. Royce Freeman, RB, Oregon
20. James Washington, WR, Oklahoma State
21. Rawleigh Williams III, RB, Arkansas
22. Justin Jackson, RB, Northwestern
23. Nick Fitzgerald, QB, Mississippi State
24. Myles Gaskin, RB, Washington
25. Ed Oliver, DT, Houston

COACHES ON THE HOT SEAT



JIM MORA

1. JIM MORA, UCLA

(41-24, five seasons)

The Bruins went 29-11 overall and 18-9 in the Pac-12 in Mora's first three seasons but have slumped to 12-13 overall and 7-11 in the league in the last two. Injuries played a part in last year's four-win campaign, but there is a strong feeling — both among UCLA fans and around college football — that this program continues to underachieve.

2. KLIFF KINGSBURY, TEXAS TECH

(24-26, four seasons)

Kingsbury has yet to record a winning record in the Big 12 or finish higher than a tie for fifth in the league standings in his four seasons at his alma mater. And here's the most damaging stat: Texas Tech has had a losing overall record twice in his four seasons after having a losing record only once in the previous 20 years. Kingsbury is beloved in Lubbock, but the Red Raiders desperately need to reach a bowl game (at least) in 2017.

3. PAUL HAYNES, KENT STATE

(12-35, four seasons)

Expectations are not high at Kent State, which has enjoyed only three winning seasons since 1977. But Haynes, defensive back for the Golden Flashes from 1987-91, must show some progress this fall after winning a total of eight league games in four seasons.

4. BRIAN KELLY, NOTRE DAME

(59-31, seven seasons)

Kelly is an interesting case. On the positive side: He's won eight games or more six times in seven seasons and reached the BCS National Championship Game in 2012. On the negative side: He's lost at least four games in five of seven seasons, including eight last year. In addition, his act — for lack of a better term — is wearing thin among most Notre Dame supporters. Despite the negativity, Kelly will have a great opportunity to coach his way back into good graces in 2017 with a team that is more than talented enough to win nine or 10 games.



KEVIN SUMLIN

5. KEVIN SUMLIN, TEXAS A&M

(44-21, five seasons)

Sumlin made a quick splash in Year 1, guiding the Aggies to an overall record of 11-2 and a 6-2 mark in the SEC in 2012 — the school's first year in the league. Since then, there's been a whole lot of mediocrity in College Station. Over the last four seasons, the Aggies are 15-17 in the SEC with finishes of fourth place twice, sixth once and a tie for fifth. The school didn't spend \$450 million on renovating Kyle Field to finish .500 in the league.

6. RICH RODRIGUEZ, ARIZONA

(36-29, five seasons)

The Rodriguez era hit its high-water mark in 2014 when the Wildcats won 10 games (for only the third time in school history) and captured the Pac-12 South title. Since, however, the program has regressed, finishing fifth in the division in 2015 (3-6) and last in 2016 (1-8). Rodriguez will have a new boss in the fall as well; Greg Byrne, who hired him in 2012, is now at Alabama and has been replaced by Dave Heeke.

7. TODD GRAHAM, ARIZONA STATE

(39-26, five seasons)

Graham earned the (deserved) reputation as a job hopper after coaching at three schools from 2006-11, but he's embarking on his sixth season at Arizona State. His first three years were very good: two 10-win seasons and a combined mark of 19-8 in the Pac-12. Like his colleague in Tucson, Rich Rodriguez, Graham has struggled in the past two years. The Sun Devils slumped to 2-7 in the league last year and ended the season with a disheartening 56-35 loss to rival Arizona — which had been winless in the Pac-12.

8. DAVID BAILIFF, RICE

(56-69, 10 seasons)

Bailiff has enjoyed a nice run at Rice — highlighted by 10-win seasons in 2008 and 2013 — but the Owls have struggled the

last two years. In 2016, they lost their first eight games against FBS competition before beating Charlotte and UTEP in November. In 10 seasons, Bailiff's teams have had a winning record in C-USA games only three times.

9. SEAN KUGLER, UTEP

(18-31, four seasons)

The Miners have had a losing record in C-USA in three of Kugler's four seasons, including a 2-6 mark in 2016. Here's an interesting note that has nothing to do with Kugler's job security: His position coach during his playing days as an offensive lineman at UTEP was Andy Reid, current head coach of the Kansas City Chiefs.

10. ROD CAREY, NORTHERN ILLINOIS

(36-19, four seasons)

Carey has guided the Huskies to a 26-6 record in the MAC in four seasons, but the program is trending in the wrong direction. In 2016, NIU went 5-3 in the league (its worst record since 2009) and had an overall losing record for the first time since 2008. Also, NIU lost to MAC West rivals Central Michigan and Western Michigan in the same season for the first time since 2008 and also lost at home to FCS foe Western Illinois.



TODD GRAHAM

10 MORE GETTING WARMER

Steve Addazio, Boston College
Bret Bielema, Arkansas
Dave Doeren, NC State
Hugh Freeze, Ole Miss
Doc Holliday, Marshall
Mike Jinks, Bowling Green
Butch Jones, Tennessee
Mike Riley, Nebraska
Tyson Summers, Georgia Southern
Matt Wells, Utah State

COACHES ON THE RISE

1. LINCOLN RILEY

Offensive Coordinator, Oklahoma

Riley has quite an impressive résumé for a 33-year-old who played one season of college football as a walk-on. He became a position coach at a Power 5 school (Texas Tech) at the age of 23 and an offensive coordinator (at East Carolina) at the age of 26. In his two years at Oklahoma, the Sooners have ranked seventh (2015) and second (2016) in total offense and 13th ('15) and second ('16) in yards per play. Last year, OU produced two Heisman finalists (quarterback Baker Mayfield and wide receiver Dede Westbrook) and had two other players (Joe Mixon and Samaje Perine) rush for 1,000-plus yards. He will be a head coach in the very near future.

2. DAVE ARANDA

Defensive Coordinator, LSU

Few coordinators have enjoyed as much success as Aranda in recent seasons. Consider the following: Last year, LSU ranked 10th in the nation in total defense, and that was the worst ranking for an Aranda-coached defense in his four seasons as a coordinator at a Power 5 school. In Aranda's three years at Wisconsin, the Badgers ranked second, fourth and seventh nationally in total defense and never allowed more than 5.0 yards per play in a season. He was the defensive coordinator at Utah State in 2012; if Matt Wells has another down year (or two), don't be surprised if Aranda is the next head coach in Logan.

3. JOE MOORHEAD

Offensive Coordinator, Penn State

Moorhead was arguably the most impactful coordinator hire in college football last season. From 2015 to '16, the Nittany Lions improved in total offense by 84.0 yards per game, 1.0 yards per play and, most importantly, 14.4 points per game. With quarterback Trace McSorley — a three-star recruit who was headed to Vanderbilt before James Franklin took the Penn State job — and running back Saquon Barkley leading the way, the Lions averaged 45.6 points over their final seven games. A former head coach at Fordham (38–13 in four seasons), Moorhead was reportedly targeted by several schools this past offseason but chose to stay at Penn State — for at least one more season.

4. SCOTT SATTERFIELD

Head Coach, Appalachian State

The Mountaineers have made a remarkably smooth transition from the FCS to FBS ranks under Satterfield's watch. After going 4–8 overall and 4–4 in the Southern Conference in 2013 — the school's final season in FCS — Appalachian State is 28–10 overall and 20–4 in the Sun Belt from '14–16. The Mountaineers opened the 2016 season with

an overtime loss at Tennessee and then proceeded to win 10 of their final 12 games, capped off with a 31–28 victory over Toledo in the Camellia Bowl. App State has led the Sun Belt in total offense each of the past two seasons en route to compiling a 14–2 league mark in that span.

5. NEAL BROWN

Head Coach, Troy

Brown has engineered a quick turnaround in his two years at Troy, guiding the Trojans to a 10–3 record in 2016 after winning only four games in 2015. Troy's finest moment last year might have come in one of its three losses, a 30–24 setback in Week 2 at Clemson, the eventual national champion. Brown, who played for Hal Mumme at Kentucky from 1998–2000, was an offensive coordinator at Troy (2008–09), Texas Tech (2010–12) and Kentucky (2013–14) before landing his first head coaching job at the age of 35.

6. PHILIP MONTGOMERY

Head Coach, Tulsa

Montgomery has restored order at Tulsa after the Golden Hurricane struggled mightily in the final years of the Bill Blankenship era. After winning six games in Year 1, Montgomery guided TU to a 10–3 record that included losses to Ohio State, Houston and Navy, three teams that won a combined 29 games. Tulsa led the American Athletic Conference in total offense with 527.0 yards per game and played at a lightning-fast pace; the Hurricane averaged 85.7 offensive snaps per game, third most in the nation. The only knock on Montgomery's otherwise impressive résumé: He spent 12 years working for Art Briles, including seven at Baylor (2008–14). That might prevent some Power 5 schools from taking a closer look.

7. MIKE NORVELL

Head Coach, Memphis

Norvell inherited a good situation from Virginia Tech-bound Justin Fuente, but he proved that he knew how to run a program in his first season as a head coach. The Tigers, who had to replace a first-round pick at quarterback (Paxton Lynch), went 8–5 overall, highlighted by wins over eventual AAC champ Temple and Houston. Norvell is doing a great job on the recruiting trail as well; Memphis' last two recruiting classes have been ranked second (2017) and third (2016) in the AAC.

8. CRAIG BOHL

Head Coach, Wyoming

Bohl won big at FCS power North Dakota State — including national titles in his final three seasons — and appears to have Wyoming on the verge of big things in the Mountain West. The Cowboys broke through with an 8–6 mark in 2016 (four of the six



LINCOLN RILEY

losses came by three points) and a share of the Mountain Division title. Bohl spent eight seasons at Nebraska in the late 1990s and early 2000s; he would be a good fit with the Cornhuskers if Mike Riley doesn't get things going in Lincoln.

9. WILLIE FRITZ

Head Coach, Tulane

Fritz won only four games in his first season at Tulane, but there is no doubt the guy knows how to coach. He's been a head coach for 20 seasons (at Division II, FCS and FBS) and has had only three losing seasons — 2017 at Tulane and 1997 and 2006 at Central Missouri. Tulane might be the toughest job in the AAC, but it will be a surprise if the Green Wave don't make significant progress soon.

10. JASON CANDLE

Head Coach, Toledo

The transition from Matt Campbell to Candle was seamless. The Rockets went 9–4 overall in 2016, with three of the losses coming by five points or fewer and the fourth to Western Michigan, which went undefeated in the regular season. Toledo's offense was among the finest in the nation, ranking seventh in yards per game (517.8), fifth in yards per play (7.2) and 19th in points per game (38.0).



WILLIE FRITZ

RANKING 2016's NEW COACHES



JUSTIN FUENTE

1. JUSTIN FUENTE, VIRGINIA TECH

Before: 7-6 (4-4) After: 10-4 (6-2)
Fuentes restored order in Blacksburg, guiding a Virginia Tech program that had slipped several notches down the ACC food chain (16-16 in league play from 2012-15) to an outright Coastal Division title. The biggest gains were made on offense; the Hokies averaged 444.9 yards per game, the most since the 1999 team that played in the BCS National Championship Game averaged 451.8.

2. CLAY HELTON, USC

Before: 8-6 (6-3) After: 10-3 (7-2)
Helton's first full season as the boss at USC got off to a rocky start, but the Trojans won their final nine games, including victories over Pac-12 South champ Colorado, Pac-12 North champ Washington and Big Ten champ Penn State. They averaged 40.4 points in their 10 wins.

3. SCOTT FROST, UCF

Before: 0-12 (0-8) After: 6-7 (4-4)
Don't let UCF's 2015 record fool you: This was not a total rebuild. Still, Frost did an outstanding job in Orlando, improving by six wins overall and four in league games. Defense was the key to the turnaround; the Knights allowed 4.8 yards per play in 2016, down from 6.5 in '15.

4. NICK ROLOVICH, HAWAII

Before: 3-10 (0-8) After: 7-7 (4-4)
Rolovich picked up the pieces from the failed Norm Chow era and managed to lead his alma mater to its first non-losing season since 2010. The Rainbow Warriors improved their point differential vs. Mountain West opponents from minus-24.7 per game in 2015 to minus-6.9 in '16.



MARK RICHT

5. KALANI SITAKE, BYU

Before: 9-4 After: 9-4
Amazingly, Sitake's first five games as a head coach were decided by three points or fewer. The Cougars went 2-3 in those games, with each loss coming to a Power 5 opponent (Utah, UCLA and West Virginia). Their fourth loss, at Boise State, was by one point. This team was very close to winning 10, 11 or even 12 games.

6. MARK RICHT, MIAMI (FLA.)

Before: 8-5 (5-3) After: 9-4 (5-3)
The record looks similar, but there is no denying that Miami was a better team in 2016. The Hurricanes won their five league games by an average of 18 points, and three of their four overall losses came by seven points or fewer. This was a very good team.

7. TRACY CLAEYS, MINNESOTA

Before: 6-7 (2-6) After: 9-4 (5-4)
Claeys, who was named the permanent coach after holding the interim tag for the final six games of the 2015 season, guided Minnesota to nine wins for only the second time since 1905. He was fired in early January due in part to his involvement in a sexual assault case involving football players.

8. FRANK WILSON, UTSA

Before: 3-9 (3-5) After: 6-7 (5-3)
Known for his recruiting prowess as an assistant at LSU, Wilson did outstanding work in his first season as a head coach. The Roadrunners didn't make huge statistical gains but managed to improve their win total by three and earn a bowl invite for the first time in the program's five seasons.

9. WILL MUSCHAMP, SOUTH CAROLINA

Before: 3-9 (1-7) After: 6-7 (3-5)
Muschamp, who was fired after four seasons

at Florida (2011-14), was not a popular hire at South Carolina, but he did a nice job in his first year in Columbia. The Gamecocks beat three SEC East rivals — Vanderbilt, Tennessee and Missouri — and returned to a bowl game after a one-year hiatus. Most important: They identified a quarterback of the future, Jake Bentley.

10. JASON CANDLE, TOLEDO

Before: 10-2 (6-2) After: 9-4 (6-2)
Candle, who served as the school's offensive coordinator under Matt Campbell, kept the Rockets humming with another solid season. Toledo won at least nine games for the fifth time in the last six seasons on the strength of an offense that set a school record with 517.8 yards per game.

11. D.J. DURKIN, MARYLAND

Before: 3-9 (1-7) After: 6-7 (3-6)

The Terrapins managed to become bowl eligible without beating a team that had a winning record in 2016, but six wins overall and three in the Big Ten is still notable progress. Another sign of (relative) progress: Every Big Ten loss came to a team that played in a bowl game. One negative: Only one of the Terps' Big Ten losses came by fewer than 21 points.

12. MIKE NORVELL, MEMPHIS

Before: 9-4 (5-3) After: 8-5 (5-3)
Memphis wasn't as relevant nationally as it was in 2015 — when the Tigers spent five weeks in the AP top 25 — but Norvell did an outstanding job keeping the program afloat in the competitive AAC without Paxton Lynch taking snaps at quarterback.

13. SETH LITRELL, NORTH TEXAS

Before: 1-11 (1-7) After: 5-8 (3-5)
North Texas, ranked No. 128 in the nation in *Athlon Sports'* 2016 preseason poll, beat two bowl teams (Army and Southern Miss) en route to a four-win improvement in Littrell's first season. Former Alabama quarterback Alec Morris started four games.

14. MATT VIATOR, ULM

Before: 2-11 (1-7) After: 4-8 (3-5)
The Warhawks made nice progress in Viator's first season, winning three Sun Belt games — and losing two others by a combined five points. On the negative side: ULM's defense allowed 6.7 yards per play, up from 5.6 in 2015.

15. KIRBY SMART, GEORGIA

Before: 10-3 (5-3) After: 8-5 (4-4)
The future looks very bright in Athens — Smart and his staff signed a top-5 recruiting class — but the product on the field was average in 2016. Some will point out that

2017 Coaching Carousel

A total of 21 programs changed hands in a busy offseason. Here's how we rank the new hires.

1. Tom Herman, Texas
2. P.J. Fleck, Minnesota
3. Willie Taggart, Oregon
4. Jeff Brohm, Purdue
5. Matt Rhule, Baylor
6. Charlie Strong, USF
7. Mike Sanford, Western Kentucky
8. Lane Kiffin, FAU
9. Randy Edsall, UConn
10. Ed Orgeron, LSU
11. Tom Allen, Indiana
12. Geoff Collins, Temple
13. Luke Fickell, Cincinnati
14. Butch Davis, FIU
15. Justin Wilcox, California
16. Major Applewhite, Houston
17. Tim Lester, Western Michigan
18. Jeff Tedford, Fresno State
19. Brent Brennan, San Jose State
20. Jay Norvell, Nevada
21. Shawn Elliott, Georgia State

the Dawgs were one play away from beating Tennessee, Vanderbilt and Georgia Tech. They should also point out that Georgia beat Nichols by two points, Missouri by one and Kentucky by three.

16. WILLIE FRITZ, TULANE

Before: 3-9 (1-7) After: 4-8 (1-7)
Fritz suffered through just the third losing season in his 20 seasons as a head coach. But progress was made at Tulane. The Green Wave increased their win total by one game and were more competitive overall; four of their eight losses came by 10 points or fewer — compared to one of nine losses by 10 points or fewer in 2015.

17. MATT CAMPBELL, IOWA STATE

Before: 3-9 (2-7) After: 3-9 (2-7)
The Cyclones won only three games in 2016 but were painfully close to winning several more and flirting with bowl eligibility. On consecutive Saturdays in October, Iowa State lost to Baylor and Oklahoma State despite holding double-digit fourth-quarter leads.

18. DINO BABERS, SYRACUSE

Before: 4-8 (2-6) After: 4-8 (2-6)
The records were identical, both overall and in league play. On the positive side: The 2016 Orange beat ACC Coastal champ Virginia Tech and improved their total offense output by 120.9 yards per game. On the negative side: The 2016 Orange's average margin of defeat was 26.3 points per game, up from 13.9 per game in 2015.

19. JAY HOPSON, SOUTHERN MISS

Before: 9-5 (7-1) After: 7-6 (4-4)
The Golden Eagles opened strong with a win at Kentucky and closed strong with wins over Louisiana Tech and Louisiana-Lafayette (in the New Orleans Bowl) but otherwise struggled through a disappointing season.

20. BARRY ODOM, MISSOURI

Before: 5-7 (1-7) After: 4-8 (2-6)
The Tigers closed Odom's first season on a positive note with two wins in their last three games (at home over Vanderbilt and Arkansas). The defense took a big step back, regressing from 4.3 yards allowed per play in 2015 to 6.1 in '16 — a big surprise considering that Odom was the Tigers' defensive coordinator prior to taking over as the head coach.

21. MIKE NEU, BALL STATE

Before: 3-9 (2-6) After: 4-8 (1-7)
The Cardinals won only one MAC game but were a bit more competitive in 2016; six of their eight losses came by 10 points or fewer, and all three of their FBS wins came on the road.

22. LOVIE SMITH, ILLINOIS

Before: 5-7 (2-6) After: 3-9 (2-7)
The Fighting Illini regressed both offensively and defensively in Smith's first season as a collegiate head coach. In addition, they lost seven games by more than 20 points and went 0-6 against teams from the Big Ten West.

23. MIKE JINKS, BOWLING GREEN

Before: 10-4 (7-1) After: 4-8 (3-5)
The Jinks era got off to a brutal start — the Falcons gave up 77 points two times in September — but there was noticeable improvement as the season progressed. After a 1-8 start, Bowling Green closed with wins over Akron, Kent State and Buffalo.



DINO BABERS

24. BRONCO MENDENHALL, VIRGINIA

Before: 4-8 (3-5) After: 2-10 (1-7)
After winning an average of 9.0 games in his 11 seasons at BYU, Mendenhall found life at Virginia to be very difficult. The Cavs won only one ACC game (at Duke) despite not playing either Clemson or Florida State.

25. SCOTTIE MONTGOMERY, EAST CAROLINA

Before: 5-7 (3-5) After: 3-9 (1-7)
The Pirates regressed significantly under Montgomery, the former David Cutcliffe pupil at Duke. East Carolina, which averaged 7.8 wins in the final four seasons of the Ruffin McNeill era, defeated only two FBS opponents and ended the season with losses in nine of its last 10 games.

26. TYSON SUMMERS, GEORGIA SOUTHERN

Before: 9-4 (6-2) After: 5-7 (4-4)
Summers might have been one-and-done in Statesboro had the Eagles not defeated Troy to end the 2016 season. It's safe to say the pressure will be on Georgia Southern to return to the top of the Sun Belt this fall.

27. CHRIS ASH, RUTGERS

Before: 4-8 (1-7) After: 2-10 (0-9)
The Scarlet Knights went winless in the Big Ten thanks in large part to an offense that scored a total of 86 points in nine conference games (including four shutouts). There is much work to be done on the banks of the Raritan River.

28. EVERETT WITHERS, TEXAS STATE

Before: 3-9 (2-6) After: 2-10 (0-8)
The Bobcats were arguably the worst team in the nation. After opening the year with a solid win at Ohio, they proceeded to lose their remaining 10 games against FBS competition, including all eight in the Sun Belt.



CHRIS ASH

QB TRANSFERS

KYLE ALLEN, TEXAS A&M TO HOUSTON

The top quarterback recruit in the class of 2014, Allen started 14 games in his two seasons at Texas A&M, including an MVP performance in the Liberty Bowl when he threw for 294 yards and four touchdowns in a win against West Virginia.

BLAKE BARNETT, ALABAMA TO ARIZONA STATE

Barnett, who started Alabama's Week 1 win over USC last season, received word in late January that he would be eligible immediately at Arizona State. A five-star recruit from Southern California, Barnett is considered the favorite to beat out incumbent Manny Wilkins for the starting QB spot. He will have three years of eligibility remaining.

MAX BROWNE, USC TO PITTSBURGH

The 2012 Gatorade National Player of the Year, Browne spent two seasons as the Trojans' No. 2 QB (behind Cody Kessler) before earning the start in Week 1 of the 2016 season. His spot atop the depth chart lasted only three weeks, however, as USC struggled early in the season. Browne will have one season of eligibility at Pitt.

DAVID CORNWELL, ALABAMA TO NEVADA

Cornwell, a graduate transfer with two years of eligibility, will be a welcome addition for Jay Norvell, the new Nevada coach. Norvell was at Oklahoma in 2014 when Cornwell, a Norman, Okla., native, signed with Alabama.

WILL GRIER, FLORIDA TO WEST VIRGINIA

Grier was off to a great start at Florida in 2015 before missing the final eight games of the season due to a PED-related suspension. Assuming he is eligible at the start of the 2017 season — which West Virginia believes will be the case — Grier is almost a lock to start when the Mountaineers take on Virginia Tech at FedEx Field in Landover, Md.

BRANDON HARRIS, LSU TO NORTH CAROLINA

Harris' career stalled at LSU — but he's not the first highly rated quarterback recruit to struggle in Baton Rouge. The biggest knock on him has been his accuracy; he completed only 53.8 percent of his passes in 2015, when he started 12 games for the Tigers.

CALEB HENDERSON, NORTH CAROLINA TO MARYLAND

A four-star recruit from Virginia, Henderson was buried behind Marquise Williams and Mitch Trubisky during his time at North Carolina. He and sophomore Tyrrell Pigrome will be the top two competitors for the starting assignment in the fall.

TANNER LEE, TULANE TO NEBRASKA

Lee, a Louisiana native, started 19 games at Tulane, 10 games as a redshirt freshman in 2014 and nine as a sophomore in 2015. He was granted an extra year of eligibility by the NCAA and will have two seasons remaining at Nebraska despite starting college in 2013.

JAKE LUTON, IDAHO TO OREGON STATE (VIA JC)

Luton left Idaho after two seasons when he failed to unseat starting quarterback Matt Linehan. In his one year at Ventura (Calif.) College, the 6'7" Washington native threw for 3,551 yards with 40 touchdowns and 15 interceptions. He will battle several holdovers for the No. 1 job at Oregon State.

SHANE MORRIS, MICHIGAN TO CENTRAL MICHIGAN

Morris' tenure at Michigan will be remembered more for the Brady Hoke/concussion controversy in 2014 than for anything else he did on the field. Morris was beaten out by Jake Rudock in 2015 and Wilton Speight in 2016 and will head CMU as the favorite to replace Cooper Rush as the Chippewas' QB.

KYLER MURRAY, TEXAS A&M TO OKLAHOMA

A five-star recruit, Murray started three games as a true freshman for the Aggies in 2015. In the short term, the best hope for the athletic but undersized Murray (listed at 5'10") is to be used as a change-of-pace option to spell Heisman candidate Baker Mayfield. There has also been talk that Murray will be used as a wide receiver.

THOMAS SIRK, DUKE TO ECU

Sirk was one of the nation's top dual-threat quarterbacks in 2015, his only season as a starter. He threw for 2,625 yards and rushed for 803 to lead an eight-win Duke team that finished third in the ACC in total offense. He missed the 2016 season with a torn Achilles in his left leg and opted to transfer rather than return for a sixth season.

ANU SOLOMON, ARIZONA TO BAYLOR

Solomon was highly productive in his first two seasons at Arizona (throwing for a combined 6,460 yards and 48 TDs) before struggling in 2016 — due in large



JARRETT STIDHAM

part to injury. His skill set is similar to P.J. Walker's, who started for four years at Temple under new Baylor coach Matt Rhule.

JARRETT STIDHAM, BAYLOR TO AUBURN (VIA JC)

After a brief stop at a junior college in Texas, Stidham arrives in Auburn with the opportunity to be the most impactful newcomer in the nation in 2017. Coach Gus Malzahn insists the quarterback job is open, but it will be a major surprise if Stidham does not beat out incumbent Sean White.

MALIK ZAIRE, NOTRE DAME TO TBD

The MVP of the 2014 Music City Bowl, Zaire appeared to be well-positioned for big things at Notre Dame ... until he suffered a broken ankle in Week 2 of the 2015 season. He lost a heated battle with DeShone Kizer last fall and attempted only 23 passes in 2016. He will be eligible as a graduate transfer in '17.

OTHER TRANSFERS OF NOTE

Jeff Badet, WR, Kentucky to Oklahoma
Jalen Brown, WR, Oregon to Northwestern
Freddie Canteen, WR, Michigan to Notre Dame
Chris Clark, TE, UCLA to Pittsburgh
Aaron Cochran, OL, California to Oklahoma St.
Jordan Davis, TE, Texas A&M to Louisville
Dee Delaney, DB, The Citadel to Miami
Cam Dillard, C, Florida to North Carolina
Chris James, RB, Pittsburgh to Wisconsin
Tyron Johnson, WR, LSU to Oklahoma State
T.J. McCollum, LB, WKU to Purdue
Kirk Merritt, WR, Oregon to Texas A&M
Scott Pagano, DL, Clemson to Oregon
Khaliel Rodgers, OL, USC to North Carolina
Corey Winfield, CB, Syracuse to West Virginia

Stidham: Auburn Athletics; Love: Peter Brouillet; Mills: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports

2017 BREAKOUT PLAYERS

NICK BOSA, DL, OHIO STATE

The Buckeyes are overflowing with talent on the defensive line, but coordinator Greg Schiano will have to find more snaps for Bosa after he recorded seven tackles for a loss and five sacks in limited action.

RASHAN GARY, DL, MICHIGAN

Michigan's deep defensive line prevented Gary — the No. 1 overall recruit in the 2016 signing class — from carving out a starting role last season. However, his potential and upside were on display in limited snaps, as he recorded five tackles for a loss and one sack.

RASHEEM GREEN, DL, USC

Greene just scratched the surface of his potential in his first year as a starter in 2016. His emergence is crucial for USC's defense after the departure of standout nose tackle Stevie Tu'ikolovatu.

WILL GRIER, QB, WEST VIRGINIA

Grier was poised to take a spot among the SEC's top quarterbacks in 2015, but a season-ending suspension after he led Florida to a 6-0 start prompted a transfer to West Virginia. Grier is the program's most talented quarterback since Geno Smith.

JAUAN JENNINGS, WR, TENNESSEE

Jennings committed to Tennessee as a quarterback but shifted to receiver in 2015. After catching 14 passes as a freshman, Jennings was a bigger part of the offense in 2016 and caught 40 passes for 580 yards and seven scores. With Josh Malone gone, Jennings is Tennessee's No. 1 receiver.



BRYCE LOVE

CALEB KELLY, LB, OKLAHOMA

The Sooners will be shifting to more four-man fronts this season. Regardless of scheme, coordinator Mike Stoops will have a place for Kelly. As a true freshman last year, he showed the ability to be a difference maker and closed 2016 by recording 12 tackles in the Sugar Bowl.

BRYCE LOVE, RB, STANFORD

Christian McCaffrey will be missed, but Stanford's ground game won't suffer much with Love as the full-time back. As McCaffrey's top backup, Love recorded 783 yards and two touchdowns.

DEDRICK MILLS, RB, GEORGIA TECH

No Georgia Tech running back has eclipsed 1,000 rushing yards in Paul Johnson's option attack since 2010. Look for Mills to break that streak after rushing for 771 yards as a true freshman last year.

NYQWAN MURRAY, WR, FLORIDA STATE

Murray emerged as a trusted option for quarterback Deondre Francois late in the 2016 season. Over Florida State's last six games, Murray caught 22 passes and five touchdowns. With Travis Rudolph departing for the NFL, he's due for even bigger role in the passing game in 2017.

SHEA PATTERSON, QB, OLE MISS

Chad Kelly's season-ending knee injury forced coach Hugh Freeze to remove Patterson's redshirt for the final three games of 2016. Patterson proved that he was worthy of his five-star hype coming out of high school during that audition, throwing for 880 yards and six touchdowns and rushing for 169 yards.

TAYLOR RAPP, DB, WASHINGTON

Sidney Jones and Budda Baker will be missed, but Rapp's emergence will ease the transition in Washington's secondary. He played in all 14 games last season, recorded four interceptions and earned Pac-12 Defensive Freshman of the Year honors.



DEDRICK MILLS

TIM SETTLE, DT, VIRGINIA TECH

Standout play in the trenches is usually an annual strength for the Hokies, and coordinator Bud Foster has his next star in Settle. After a redshirt year in 2015, Settle played in 14 games as a reserve last season and recorded seven tackles for a loss.

JARRETT STIDHAM, QB, AUBURN

Stidham is the missing piece for an Auburn's offense that has struggled to establish a consistent passing game in recent seasons. He threw for 1,265 yards and 12 scores in 10 games at Baylor in 2015.

TRENTON THOMPSON, DL, GEORGIA

Thompson finished 2016 with a dominant performance (3.5 tackles for a loss) in Georgia's Liberty Bowl win over TCU. The junior took a leave of absence this spring, but the former No. 1 overall recruit in the 2015 signing class is slated to return for the fall.

BRANDON WIMBUSH, QB, NOTRE DAME

Wimbush is coming off a redshirt year after receiving limited snaps as a true freshman in 2015. The sophomore should thrive under new coordinator Chip Long, and his development is critical for Notre Dame's hopes of improvement after a 4-8 season.

BACK FROM INJURY

NATE ANDREWS, DB, FLORIDA STATE

Alabama native has been an impact player in the Seminoles' secondary — when healthy. He battled through injuries as a junior in 2015 and then missed the final seven games of last season with a torn pectoral muscle. Andrews will be a fifth-year senior in 2017.

DRAVON ASKEW-HENRY, DB WEST VIRGINIA

Askev-Henry broke into the starting lineup as a true freshman and started all 26 games in 2014 and '15. He was expected to replace Karl Joseph as the leader of the Mountaineers' secondary last fall but went down with a knee injury in preseason camp.

MARCELL ATEMAN, WR OKLAHOMA STATE

A big receiver who enjoyed a breakthrough junior season in 2015 (45 catches for 766 yards), Ateman had surgery on his foot last summer and was unable to play in 2016.

DREW BARKER, QB, KENTUCKY

Barker was limited to only three games due to a back injury in his first season as the Wildcats' full-time starter. He will battle senior Stephen Johnson, who guided UK to a bowl game, for the No. 1 job in 2017.

TERRY BECKNER, DL, MISSOURI

One of the top recruits to sign with Missouri in recent years, Beckner has gone down with ACL tears in each of the last two seasons (right knee in 2015, left knee in '16). If healthy, he has the ability to be one of the top defensive linemen in the SEC.

YODNY CAJUSTE, OL, WEST VIRGINIA

In 2015 as a redshirt freshman, Cajuste started the first six games at left tackle before sustaining a foot injury against Baylor. Last year, he went down with a torn ACL in his left knee in a Week 1 win over Missouri.

KELLER CHRYST, QB, STANFORD

Chryst's availability is in doubt after he tore the ACL in his right knee in the Cardinal's win over North Carolina in the Sun Bowl. Ryan Burns, who started seven games last season, initially planned to transfer but has decided to return due to Chryst's status.

JACK CICHY, LB, WISCONSIN

Cichy was playing at a very high level when he was sidelined with a torn pectoral muscle in the Badgers' win at Iowa in late October. He will join Chris Orr — who missed all but one game last season — in what should be one of the Big Ten's best linebacking corps.

TYRELL CROSBY, OL, OREGON

Crosby started 12 games at right tackle as a sophomore in 2015. He moved over to left tackle in 2016 but played in only two games

due to a foot injury. He is expected to start at left tackle for Willie Taggart's club in 2017.

SHAUN DION HAMILTON, LB, ALABAMA

Hamilton, who started at inside linebacker, tore the ACL in his right knee in the SEC Championship Game. Alabama is hopeful he will be ready for Week 1.

KYLIE FITTS, DL, UTAH

The one-time UCLA Bruin emerged as a force in 2015, starting 11 games at end and ranking fourth in the league with 7.0 sacks. He started one game at end and one game at linebacker in 2016 before a foot injury ended his season.

DERWIN JAMES, S, FLORIDA STATE

A five-star recruit, James enjoyed an outstanding freshman season in 2015 and seemingly was on his way to an All-America sophomore campaign last fall. But he played in only two games due to a knee injury (torn meniscus) suffered in an early September game against Charleston Southern.

CHRISTIAN LACOUTURE, DL, LSU

LaCouture was a mainstay on the LSU defensive line (23 starts in 2014-15) before being sidelined with a season-ending knee injury early in camp last August. He will be expected to rejoin the starting lineup in his fifth and final season.

TOA LOBENDAHN, OL, USC

Lobendahn started the first seven games (five at right guard, two at center) of his sophomore season before tearing the ACL in his left knee in a win over Utah in October. He returned to the lineup last fall but tore the ACL and MCL in his right knee in a Week 1 loss to Alabama. Assuming he's healthy, Lobendahn could play any spot on the offensive line.

SKAI MOORE, LB, SOUTH CAROLINA

A second-team All-SEC pick as a junior in 2015, Moore was expected to anchor Will Muschamp's defense in the coach's first year in Columbia. But the Florida native was forced to miss what would have been his true senior season with a neck injury. Moore is a safe bet to lead South Carolina in tackles for the fourth time.



SKAI MOORE

JOSH ROSEN, QB, UCLA

One of the top quarterback talents in the nation, Rosen missed the final six games of his sophomore season with a shoulder injury. He is one of a few candidates to be the No. 1 pick in the 2017 NFL Draft.

MATT VANDEBERG, WR, IOWA

VandeBerg developed into a reliable threat in the Hawkeyes' passing attack as a junior in 2015, catching a team-high 65 passes for 703 yards. He had 19 receptions for 284 yards through four games in 2016 before a broken foot ended his season.

AZEEM VICTOR, LB, WASHINGTON

The Huskies lost one of their top defensive players last November to a leg injury that kept him out of the remainder of the regular season and the College Football Playoff loss to Alabama. He will be back to lead a revamped UW defense in 2017.

CHRIS WARREN, RB, TEXAS

Warren was on his way to a productive junior season — he had 366 yards on 62 attempts through three-plus games — before going down with a knee injury against Oklahoma State. With D'Onta Foreman (and his 2,028 rushing yards) gone to the NFL, Warren is expected to be Texas' primary ball carrier.

TREVON YOUNG, LB, LOUISVILLE

Young missed the entire 2016 season while recovering from a serious hip injury suffered in the '15 Music City Bowl. A starter at outside linebacker, Young recorded 8.5 sacks as a junior in his second season after transferring to Louisville from junior college.

TOP 20 'GROUP OF 5' PLAYERS



ED OLIVER

1. ED OLIVER, HOUSTON, DT

The Houston native made an immediate impact on the Cougars' defense, becoming the first true freshman to earn first-team AP All-America honors since 2011. Oliver (No. 6 in the 247Sports Composite) was the highest-rated prospect to sign with a non-Power 5 school in the Internet recruiting era.

2. QUINTON FLOWERS, QB, USF

Flowers was one of the most underrated players in the nation last season. He and Lamar Jackson — the Heisman Trophy winner — were the only two players to top 1,500 yards rushing and 2,500 yards passing. He accounted for 42 touchdowns as well.

3. RICHIE JAMES, WR, MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Overlooked by SEC schools due to his size — he's listed at 5'9", 178 pounds — James has been one of the most productive wide receivers in the nation the last two seasons. He followed up a 108-catch, 1,346-yard redshirt freshman campaign in 2015 with 105 catches for 1,625 yards last fall.

4. WILL HERNANDEZ, OL, UTEP

Hernandez has been a fixture on the Miners' offensive line, starting 37 straight games at left guard. He became the first UTEP offensive lineman since 2009 to earn first-team All-C-USA honors as a junior in 2016.

5. LOGAN WOODSIDE, QB, TOLEDO

Woodside was brilliant in his return to action after missing the 2015 season with an injury. He led the nation with 45 touchdown passes and ranked third in yards per attempt (9.9).

6. BRENT STOCKSTILL, QB MIDDLE TENNESSEE

The son of the Blue Raiders' head coach has been terrific in his two seasons as the starter. He threw for 4,005 yards as a true

freshman in 2015 and 3,233 last year despite missing three-plus games with an injury. Last fall, he threw for 280 yards and four TDs and rushed for 81 yards in MTSU's 51-45 win at Missouri.

7. COURTLAND SUTTON, WR, SMU

Sutton emerged as a big-play threat for the Mustangs as a sophomore, catching 76 passes for 1,246 yards and 10 touchdowns. He is averaging a healthy 16.9 yards per reception in his two seasons.

8. JA'VON ROLLAND-JONES, DL, ARKANSAS STATE

Rolland-Jones was named the Sun Belt Player of the Year after a banner junior season in which recorded 11.5 sacks and tied for the league lead with 18.5 tackles for a loss. He averaged over a sack per game in league play.

9. JAYLON FERGUSON, DL, LOUISIANA TECH

Ferguson is the latest standout defensive lineman for Tech. Last season, he earned first-team All-Conference USA honors after leading the league with 14.5 sacks.

10. MIKE WHITE, QB, WKU

White flourished in his first season at WKU after transferring from South Florida, throwing for 4,363 yards and 37 touchdowns and — more impressive — ranking second nationally with 10.5 yards per passing attempt. He will play his final season under new coach Mike Sanford.

11. BRETT RYPIEN, QB, BOISE STATE

The nephew of the former Super Bowl-winning quarterback Mark Rypien has enjoyed two solid seasons running the Boise State attack. Last fall, he threw for 3,646 yards and 24 touchdowns.

12. JOSH ALLEN, QB, WYOMING

The former junior college transfer is emerging as a legitimate NFL prospect. He threw for 3,203 yards and 28 touchdowns while adding 523 yards on the ground. He will need to cut down on his interceptions as a senior; he threw 15 in 2016.

13. ANTHONY MILLER, WR, MEMPHIS

Miller was highly productive in his first season as the Tigers' No. 1 receiver. The Memphis native caught 95 passes for 1,434 yards and 14 touchdowns, highlighted by a 12-catch, 250-yard effort against Tulsa.

14. SHAQUEM GRIFFIN, LB, UCF

Griffin was named the Defensive Player of the Year in the AAC in a vote by the league's coaches. He led the league in sacks (11.0) and was third in tackles for a loss (19.0).

15. ANDREW WINGARD, S, WYOMING

Wingard followed up a Freshman All-America season in 2015 by tying for fourth nationally with 131 tackles and earning first-team All-Mountain West honors.

16. ITO SMITH, RB, SOUTHERN MISS

Smith opened up his junior season by rushing for 173 yards in Southern Miss' comeback win at Kentucky and proceeded to top the 100-yard mark seven more times en route to a 1,459-yard campaign.

17. JAKE BENNETT, C, COLORADO STATE

Bennett has started 26 straight games for the Rams, including 13 at center last season. He earned second-team All-Mountain West honors in 2016 and projects to be one of the top centers in college football this fall and a legitimate NFL prospect.

18. CHUKWUMA OKORAFOR, OT, WESTERN MICHIGAN

One of the top recruits of the P.J. Fleck era, Okorafor moved from right to left tackle in 2016 and anchored an offensive line that averaged a MAC-high 41.6 points per game.

19. QUENTIN POLING, LB, OHIO

Poling is entering his fourth season as a starter at inside linebacker for the Bobcats. He earned first-team All-MAC honors in 2016 after recording 109 tackles.

20. ULYSEES GILBERT III, LB, AKRON

Gilbert, like Poling, was a first-team All-MAC pick in 2016. The 6'1", 225-pound Ocala, Fla., native ranked third in the league with 121 tackles.



RICHIE JAMES

TEAMS ON THE RISE

Analytics can tell us which teams are poised to surprise in 2017

BY BILL CONNELLY

Looking back at the preseason polls once a season has ended is like looking at an old yearbook before your high school reunion. I really thought that hair style looked good? And what's with that shirt? What was I thinking?

I really thought Tennessee was a top-10 team? How could I have believed that Ole Miss and Michigan State were going to be fine after what they lost following 2015? And really? Notre Dame?

College football is inherently and beautifully unpredictable, and we wouldn't want it any other way. Still, we should be using every tool at our disposal to keep the humiliating recollections at a minimum.

That includes computers. Now, to be sure, computers wouldn't have saved you from Notre Dame, and they would have worked really hard to convince you that 2016 really was Ole Miss' time to shine. But they would have told you not to waste your time with TCU or Iowa, and they would have told you that you should really think twice about Michigan State. They would have also told you to trade Stanford for Washington. That would have been a start, at least.

I've been maintaining the S&P+ ratings at FootballOutsiders.com since 2008. They represent an attempt to dig deep, deriving efficiency and explosiveness from the play-by-play level. They combine aspects of football that affect college football's Five Factors — efficiency, explosiveness, field position, finishing drives and turnovers — into a single opponent-adjusted number. This system of ratings attempts to derive value from every play and drive of a given game (filtering out garbage time), and it watches every game, so to speak.

Each year, S&P+ produces results that make you doubt its creator's sanity. But if you know what you are looking for, a system like this can be very useful. Among other things, it can drop pretty strong hints regarding who's about to have a really good, or really poor, season.

What might seem like strange rankings could be reminders that the college football season is a small-sample exercise. Distill a college basketball team's schedule down to four non-conference games and eight conference games, and you can easily produce mediocre records for great teams and great records for mediocre teams.

Last year, in this space, we discussed some potential statistical outliers for the 2016 season and listed six teams that might end up doing quite a bit better than their 2015 results would suggest.

Washington was one of those teams. "If you only pay attention to wins and losses, you may be a little bit confused by the Washing-



DERRIUS GUICE, RB

2016 S&P+ RANKINGS

S&P+ Rk Team (Record)

- 1 Alabama (14-1)
- 2 Clemson (14-1)
- 3 Michigan (10-3)
- 4 LSU (8-4)
- 5 Ohio State (11-2)
- 6 Florida State (10-3)
- 7 Washington (12-2)
- 8 Penn State (11-3)
- 9 USC (10-3)
- 10 Oklahoma (11-2)

S&P+ Rk Team (Record)

- 11 Wisconsin (11-3)
- 12 Louisville (9-4)
- 13 Auburn (8-5)
- 14 Miami (9-4)
- 15 Florida (9-4)
- 16 Western Kentucky (11-3)
- 17 Virginia Tech (10-4)
- 18 Colorado (10-4)
- 19 Boise State (10-3)
- 20 Pitt (8-5)

ton hype," we said. "Sure, they beat USC and looked good in their bowl win, but really? Pac-12 North favorites? Beneath the surface, though, the Huskies were far better than your typical 7-6 team, and they were incredibly young as well." Indeed, those close losses became close wins, and the easy wins got even easier.

Washington improved by five wins in 2016, and two other teams we listed — Wake Forest (plus-4) and Nebraska (plus-3) — drastically improved in the win column as well. Granted, two others (LSU and Tennessee) basically held steady, and one (UCLA) fell apart.

Still, that's like hitting two home runs, a double and a sac fly in a baseball game while striking out once on three pitches. You'll take it.

On the flip side, S&P+ projected AP top-20 teams Houston (53rd), Iowa (38th), TCU (31st) and Michigan State (22nd) far lower than the humans did. Combined, these teams won 22 fewer games in 2016 than in '15.

What are the computers — and the S&P+ rankings in particular — saying about 2017? To answer that, let's begin by once again looking at teams that may have either looked out of place in the 2016 rankings or might be due to surprise in 2017.

LSU

Rarely is a dichotomy as perfect as it was for LSU's offense in 2016. The Tigers played 12 games last fall — four against teams that were ranked in the top 10 of Defensive S&P+ and eight vs. teams that weren't

Against the eight defenses outside of the top 10, LSU was dominant. The Tigers averaged 7.5 yards per play and, despite a slow tempo, 37.9 points per game. They went 8-0 in these contests, winning by an average of 21.8 points. This includes games against five bowl teams and a bowl matchup against Lamar Jackson and Louisville.

Against the four teams with elite defenses, however, the results were just slightly different: 4.9 yards per play, 9.3 points per game, and an 0-4 record despite a defense that allowed just 15 points per game in these contests.

As observers, we see that and tie it to previous seasons. Les Miles couldn't develop a quarterback! LSU's offense stunk (because of a tiny sample)! The Tigers were overrated ... again.

The numbers, however, see a team that was really, really close to a brilliant season. They were a late interception away from potentially beating an eventual 11-win Wisconsin team and suffered late

goal-line miscues in losses to both Auburn and Florida. And while Alabama's 14-0 start featured 12 wins by at least 18 points, the Tide were tied with the Tigers, 0-0, heading into the fourth quarter.

S&P+ sees a team that had a brilliant defense and an offense that had four great gears but needed a fifth. It also sees a team that recruits at an elite level and has won an average of 10 games per season in the rugged SEC West over the last 14 seasons (and a still-solid 9.6 over nine years since its 2007 national title).

It sees, in other words, one of the safest bets in college football. Dominating iffy teams while losing tight games against good-to-great ones is a way to get overlooked in human polls while setting yourself up beautifully for the future, and LSU was closer to 10-2 or even 11-1 than 7-5 last year.

Of course, LSU does, in fact, need a quarterback. And while turnover was kept to a minimum during Ed Orgeron's shift from interim head coach to full-timer, the Tigers still have a lot of their hopes pinned on a new offensive coordinator. That's always a scary proposition. But it's hard to find many teams with more impressive raw materials, and there are just enough new influences involved to make you think this might be the year LSU again lives up to its full potential.



Speaking of losing close games to good teams, Notre Dame nearly trademarked the concept last season. Against teams ranked 17th, 23rd, 25th and 36th in S&P+, the Irish went 0-4 with each loss coming by a touchdown or less. They suffered a whopping eight losses in 2016, and only one was by more than eight points. Meanwhile, they beat an excellent Miami team (14th in S&P+).

S&P+ uses a concept called win expectancy; it basically says, "Based on the key stats of this game — success rate, explosiveness, field position factors, etc. — you could have expected to win this game X percent of the time." Win expectancy said Notre Dame had a 62 percent chance of winning the game it lost, 38-35, to Duke. The Irish had a 52 percent chance of beating Stanford; they lost, 17-10. They had a 67 percent chance of beating Navy; they lost, 28-27. They had a 56 percent chance of beating Virginia Tech; they lost, 34-31.

It's really hard to lose basically every tossup game you play. It's

also not sustainable. Notre Dame may have gone 4-8, but the Irish still ranked 26th in S&P+, higher than in either 2013 (9-4 but 34th in S&P+) or 2014 (8-5, 31st). On paper, they were much more like a 7-5 team — not good enough for Brian Kelly or Notre Dame fans, but not as embarrassing as 4-8.

Like LSU, Notre Dame hopes that new coordinators will turn fortunes around. Kelly brought in Wake Forest's brilliantly successful Mike Elko to fix a defense that wasn't terrible under Brian VanGorder — 40th in Defensive S&P+ in 2014, 34th in 2015, 28th in 2016 — but also wasn't good enough. Meanwhile, former Memphis offensive coordinator Chip Long takes the reins after Mike Sanford took the Western Kentucky job. A blood transfusion on the coaching staff can often be exactly what a disappointed team needs, but it adds to the uncertainty surrounding a team that shouldn't have been nearly that disappointing a year ago.

TEXAS

Per win expectancy, the Longhorns were about a seven-win team; they had a 69 percent chance of beating West Virginia and an 85 percent chance of beating Kansas, and they lost both games by a combined seven points. That doomed Charlie Strong in his efforts to turn the Longhorns around even though the Longhorns did improve from 69th in S&P+ to 36th.

It did bring Tom Herman to Austin, however. And the former Houston coach inherits a team that returns a good percentage of last year's production. Quarterback Shane Buechele was a true freshman, and a staggering 11 of the top 15 tacklers were either freshmen or sophomores. Most of the receiving corps and offensive line are back, too.

A team that improved 30 spots in S&P+ despite extreme youth, returns most of its starters, and consistently recruits at a top-30 level? You can probably expect that team to, at worst, maintain last year's form. And if the good fortune evens out, that probably means Texas' win total will improve by a decent amount in 2017 even if the Longhorns are still learning what Herman is trying to teach them.



SHANE BUECHELE, QB

AUBURN

Auburn's 8-5 record was primarily an effect of the Tigers' schedule. They played four teams ranked in the S&P+ top 10 and lost to three of them. They also made the mistake of playing Texas A&M (S&P+ No. 24) in September, when the Aggies have been at their best for the last few years.

Again, though, the way you dispose of lesser competition can be as telling as how you play against good teams. (And to be sure, Auburn wasn't awful against top teams, beating LSU and nearly taking down eventual national champion Clemson.) Against teams ranked 27th or worse, the Tigers went 7-1 with an average score of 41-12. Their defense was strong all season, ranking ninth in Defensive S&P+, and when healthy at quarterback, they showed promise offensively.

As with every team on this list so far, Auburn is working with a new offensive coordinator. The Tigers will conceivably have a new starting quarterback, too. But if Kevin Steele's defense lives up to last year's promise once more, Auburn has a ceiling higher than many realize.



KAMRYN PETTWAY, RB

OREGON STATE

A coach's second year is perhaps when a program is most likely to improve. That's good news for several SEC East teams (South Carolina, Georgia, Missouri), but at first glance, you might not think there was much of a second-year effect in Corvallis last year. Sure, Oregon State improved from 2-10 to 4-8 in Gary Andersen's second year in charge, but you might be writing that off as the effect of playing Idaho State early and taking on Arizona and Oregon teams that had fallen apart late in the season.

S&P+ sees something more. Oregon State improved by 35 spots, from 100th to 65th, in 2016. That put them ahead of, among others, a rising SEC East fivesome (Kentucky was 67th, Georgia 68th, Missouri 69th, Vanderbilt 71st and South Carolina 79th) that we'll address next. And the Beavers pulled that off with a sophomore quarterback, sophomore and freshman running backs, a receiving corps that featured four sophomores and two freshmen and a defense that had only three seniors among its top 16 tacklers.

OSU suffered three tight losses to good teams in 2016 (Minnesota, Utah, Washington State) and could stand to improve dramatically with just a little bit of progress in the passing game.



RYAN NALL, RB

Buechele: Tim Umphrey; Pettway: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Nall: AP; Samuel: Tom DiPace; Harbaugh: Tom Lynn



SOUTH CAROLINA

The SEC East was absurdly young in 2016. South Carolina, Kentucky, Vanderbilt and Georgia all return some of the highest production rates in the country, and Missouri isn't that far behind. One of the stories of the season could be the improvement that these five teams, and therefore the division as a whole, begin to show.

South Carolina wasn't a good team last fall. The Gamecocks ranked 79th in overall S&P+ and needed four one-possession wins to reach bowl eligibility. But they were also maybe the youngest team in a young division. Two freshman quarterbacks (Jake Bentley and Brandon McIlwain) combined for 2,020 passing yards, two fresh-

man running backs combined for 1,261 rushing yards, and freshmen and sophomores accounted for almost every receiving yard. So when you see that the Gamecocks ranked 107th in Offensive S&P+, don't automatically write this off as the Will Muschamp Effect.

At the same time, the defense was more experienced than the offense but still returns a majority of a unit that improved from 95th to 50th in Defensive S&P+. The Gamecocks should expect to field their best defense since Jadeveon Clowney was suiting up. If experience results in simply mediocre offense, South Carolina could threaten to crack the top 40.



JIM HARBAUGH

TEAMS ON THE *DECLINE*

MICHIGAN Jim Harbaugh has quickly built a sturdy, dangerous program, albeit one that hasn't quite mastered the art of finishing a season strong just yet. His recruiting and general coaching prowess should assure the Wolverines of plenty of success moving forward, but extreme turnover could limit Michigan in 2017. Michigan must replace its leading rusher, its three leading receivers, its Heisman-finalist defender, and, in total, 17 starters. That much turnover all but assures short-term regression.

WEST VIRGINIA WVU fans are excited about Florida transfer Will Grier taking over at quarterback, and he could combine with running back Justin Crawford to create one of the Big 12's better backfields. But you need a little bit more help than this duo might get in 2017. The Mountaineers must replace 14 starters from a team that S&P+ didn't like that much to begin with. They ranked just 29th in S&P+ despite winning 10 games, a product of winning four

one-possession games and losing badly to good teams. WVU played three S&P+ top-30 teams in 2016 and went 0-3 with an average score of 41-21.

NEBRASKA The Cornhuskers were on last year's "likely to improve" list, but really, only the win total improved. Nebraska actually fell from 36th in S&P+ in 2015 to 46th last fall. What changed? Luck and close-game performance. Based on national averages for fumble recoveries and the ratio of interceptions to passes broken up, Nebraska's turnover margin should have been about plus-0.5 in 2015 and minus-4.8 in 2016; instead, it was minus-12 in 2015 and plus-5 last year. This drastic shift in turnover luck put its finger on the scales. The Huskers were 3-6 in one-possession games in 2015 and 3-1 in 2016. Otherwise, they were, at best, basically the same team. That's not necessarily encouraging considering Nebraska now returns only 12 starters, third fewest in the Big Ten.

ATHLON SPORTS' COLLEGE FOOTBALL ROUNDTABLE

Athlon Sports' editors lay their reputations on the line with some predictions and analysis for the 2017 college football season.

Which team not in our preseason top 10 has the best chance to make the College Football Playoff?

Mitch Light: OKLAHOMA STATE. The Cowboys are loaded on offense, with one of the nation's most underrated quarterbacks in Mason Rudolph and an elite crop of wide receivers. Everyone knows about James Washington, but don't forget that Marcell Ateman averaged 17.0 yards per reception in 2015 before missing last season with an injury. They also add Tyron Johnson, a former five-star recruit who transferred from LSU once he realized that he wouldn't get the ball enough in Baton Rouge. Yes, there are some holes to fill on defense, but Oklahoma State could challenge Oklahoma for the Big 12 title and play its way into the College Football Playoff.



MASON RUDOLPH

Steven Lassin: The Big 12 teams — Oklahoma State and Texas — are intriguing, but I'm going with **GEORGIA**. Kirby Smart had a disappointing debut with an 8-5 finish last year. However, three of those losses came by three points or fewer. With 16 returning starters, and the development of quarterback Jacob Eason, the Bulldogs should be able to convert some of those close losses into wins and edge Florida for the East Division title. Eason's progression adds another dimension to an offense featuring standout backs Sony Michel and Nick Chubb. The defense allowed 5.3 yards per play last season and is poised to rank among the SEC's best in 2017. If Eason takes a significant step forward, Georgia will easily exceed our No. 15 ranking.

Braden Gall: The SEC East champ. Right now, that is **GEORGIA**. But should any one of the three main contenders (Florida and Tennessee are the others) gets to and wins in Atlanta with two or fewer losses, there is a good chance they would get in. The Bulldogs are the pick because the defense returns intact, and Kirby Smart appears to have the best QB in the division. Beating Bama in the SEC Championship Game would look awfully good on a résumé.



JAYLEN SAMUELS

What about a team not in our top 25?

Mitch Light: I really like NC State as a team that could end up being in the top 25, but I can't see the Pack winning the brutal ACC Atlantic Division, so there is no way they can be a Playoff team. I will go with **UCLA**. There is no denying this team has talent — they just haven't been able to put it together in recent years. If Josh Rosen stays healthy and plays like a future No. 1 pick in the draft, the Bruins could surprise in 2017. It's always dangerous to latch on to UCLA in the offseason, but there aren't many teams — at least teams not in our preseason top 25 — that can match their talent.

Steven Lassin: It seems strange to pick a team that needed a late surge to potentially avoid a coaching change, but I like **NC STATE** as a sleeper in 2017. The Wolfpack were an uneven team last season. They lost by three to East Carolina and by seven to Boston College yet nearly defeated Florida State and Clemson. If coach Dave Doeren can get this team to play with more week-to-week consistency, the talent is there to be a top-25 team.

Braden Gall: I would look to the Pac-12. **WASHINGTON STATE** and **UTAH** head a list of quality West Coast teams that we are a little unsure of at this stage of the year. **COLORADO** and **UCLA** also have eyes on winning the division and sit just outside the top 25. If a team is going to make a run into the final four, it will likely have to win its conference, and the Cougars, with a veteran quarterback, and the Utes, with an entrenched identity, appear to have the best path to the Playoff.



JEFF BROHM

What was the best hire of the offseason?

Mitch Light: There were a bunch of good ones. I'll go with **JEFF BROHM AT PURDUE**. It was a real coup for the Boilermakers to lure him from Western Kentucky, where he went 30-10 in three years, including a 19-5 record in Conference USA. His teams ranked in the top 10 nationally in total offense in all three years and were in the top five twice. And while they did put up gaudy passing numbers throwing the ball all over the field, the Hilltoppers had nice balance and always had some really good running backs. He was also a very good talent evaluator; some of Western's top skill players were lightly recruited or not recruited at all. Brohm and his staff do a nice job evaluating and developing talent — and that is something you need to do at Purdue to be successful.

Steven Lissan: **TOM HERMAN AT TEXAS** Success seems to follow Herman at every step. From 2015-16, Herman went 22-4 and transformed Houston into one of the top Group of 5 programs. As a former Longhorn graduate assistant and coach with ties to the state of Texas, Herman has a grasp on the culture, facility and recruiting issues this program needed to address in order to return to the top of the Big 12. Herman is regarded as one of the top offensive minds after a successful stint as a play caller at four different schools. He will provide an immediate spark for a program that has under-achieved in recent years.

Which coach is under the most pressure in 2017?

Mitch Light: **KLIFF KINGSBURY AT TEXAS TECH**. He's one of the most popular players in school history, but the results just haven't been good enough in four seasons. He's under .500 overall and 10 games under .500 in Big 12 games. The offense, as expected, has been very good, but the defense continues to be atrocious. Kingsbury will have to get to a bowl game at a minimum to save his job.

Steven Lissan: **JIM MORA AT UCLA**. With USC emerging once again as one of the top-10 teams in the nation, there's added pressure on Mora to right the ship after a disappointing 4-8 season. Of course, it's unfair to pin the blame solely on Mora for last year's record. The Bruins lost quarterback Josh Rosen midway through the season with a shoulder injury and never recovered. Mora is 25-20 in conference play since 2012. That ranks sixth among Pac-12 teams. Additionally, the Bruins watched Colorado take a step forward and win the South Division last year. UCLA needs to reassert itself as one of the top teams in the league to cool Mora's seat.

Braden Gall: Anyone in the SEC not named Nick Saban? **BUTCH JONES AT TENNESSEE** is only under marginally more pressure than Gus Malzahn at Auburn, Kirby Smart at Georgia or Kevin Sumlin at Texas A&M. Jones' new athletic director won't take kindly to a bloodthirsty fan base. The Vols shouldn't be the frontrunner in the SEC East, but Big Orange Nation doesn't care. It wants a division title or Jones may be in trouble. Such is life in the SEC.



KAMRYN PETTWAY

Which top-10 team scares you the most? Which team do you think we might have over-ranked?

Mitch Light: Probably **AUBURN**, a team that failed to live up to lofty expectations two years ago. This time, though, is different (we think) because Jarrett Stidham should end up being much, much better at quarterback than Jeremy Johnson. But even if Stidham ends up being as good as we think, Auburn still has some question marks. The Tigers need some playmakers to step up at wide receiver, and they lost two very good players on the defensive line in Carl Lawson and Montravius Adams. I like Auburn as the No. 2 team in the SEC West, but it wouldn't shock me if they don't end up in the top 10. Their margin for error isn't as great as some other teams in their range.

Steven Lissan: A quarterback like Sam Darnold can mask a lot of issues ... or carry **USC** into the CFB Playoff. However, I think this team has more concerns than our No. 5 ranking would suggest. Darnold and running back Ronald Jones form one of the Pac-12's top backfields in 2017, but the Trojans lost three All-Pac-12 offensive linemen and standout receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster. The defense wasn't bad last year, finishing fifth in the conference last season by holding opponents to 5.4 yards per play. That number increased to 6.1 in games against teams with a winning record. The pass rush managed only 26 sacks, and standout tackle Stevie Tu'ikolovatu is gone. Additionally, standout cornerback Adoree' Jackson left for the NFL. Can coach Clay Helton get USC to recapture the same magic this team had over the final nine games? With the personnel concerns, it's fair to wonder if this team will have trouble meeting preseason expectations.

Braden Gall: There are a lot of volatile teams in the top 10 that need to prove it, but I will go with **OKLAHOMA**. Realistically, the Big 12 champ will be a top-10 team, and the Sooners are clearly the favorite. But stacked up against the rest of the top 10, Bob Stoops' bunch doesn't appear to be nearly as deep or talented. Baker Mayfield is incredible, and the defense is getting better, but the Big 12 is very balanced, and I just don't see the same level of athlete in this league as I do in other Power 5 conferences.

Name a coordinator hire that you like.

Mitch Light: Tough one. I'll give **JIM LEAVITT**, the new defensive coordinator at Oregon, the nod over Kevin Wilson (OC at Ohio State). Leavitt did a great job during his two years at Colorado and was a big reason the Buffaloes won the Pac-12 South title last season. The Buffs ranked 19th in the nation in total defense in 2016, up from 85th in 2015 and 114th in 2014, the year before he got there. He will do a great job in Eugene.

Steven Lissan: **KEVIN WILSON** at Ohio State. Even though the Buckeyes averaged 39.4 points a game last season, it was clear this unit needed an overhaul for 2017. Since Tom Herman left Columbus, the big-play ability and passing game of Ohio State's offense has regressed. But Wilson should immediately make an impact on a team capable of winning the CFB Playoff.



ED ORGERON

What was the most puzzling hire?

Mitch Light: **MAJOR APPLEWHITE** at Houston. That program had a ton of momentum after Tom Herman put the Cougars on the national map in his two seasons, and it's arguably the most coveted Group of 5 head coaching job in the country. Applewhite might end up being a great coach, but it feels like Houston settled by tabbing a Herman assistant to take over. Seems like a guy like Sonny Dykes, who had been a successful head coach, would have been a better choice.

Steven Lissan: I thought Nevada's hire of **JAY NORVELL** was surprising. He's a 54-year-old career assistant with no previous head coaching experience. And his résumé as an offensive coordinator leaves a lot to be desired. Nevada doesn't have the resources of some of the Mountain West's top programs, but this job would have been a good spot for an up-and-coming assistant or Power 5 coordinator. With UNLV and Hawaii on the rise in the same division, I'm not sure this hire helps the Wolf Pack hunt down San Diego State.

Braden Gall: **ED ORGERON**. Coach O is a great recruiter, one helluva defensive line coach and a likable guy. But I have no idea if he's capable of handling the treacherous waters of Baton Rouge. Les Miles won nearly 80 percent of his games and a national championship and was still run out of town. That's the level of expectation at LSU, and it is a complete unknown if those stakes are too big for Orgeron. It's not the first time we've been puzzled by the LSU administration.



QUINTON FLOWERS

Name a dark horse Heisman candidate.

Mitch Light: I'll pick a guy outside of our list of top-15 candidates (page 31) — **QUINTON FLOWERS** at South Florida. Flowers, the Bulls' senior quarterback, put up amazing numbers last season; he and Lamar Jackson (the 2016 Heisman winner) were the only two players in the nation with at least 2,500 yards passing and 1,500 yards rushing. South Florida is poised for a special season under Charlie Strong — the Bulls might be favored in every game — and don't be surprised if Flowers plays his way into a trip to New York in December.

Steven Lissan: Auburn has struggled to find the right balance on offense in coach Gus Malzahn's four-year tenure. Not anymore. Former Baylor signal caller **JARRETT STIDHAM** transferred to Auburn after a stint at a junior college (where he didn't play football) in 2016. Stidham was regarded as one of the top recruits in the 2015 signing class and threw for 1,265 yards and 12 scores as a true freshman. He left Waco after Art Briles was dismissed. The Tigers led the SEC in rushing offense last year and should be able to pound away at opponents once again with running back Kamryn Pettway. With one of the SEC's top offensive lines and ground games, Stidham is going to have plenty of one-on-one matchups on the outside. Look for Stidham to emerge as one of the nation's top quarterbacks in Auburn's high-powered attack.

Braden Gall: **WILL GRIER** at West Virginia. The folks in Morgantown are bubbling over with excitement about their new quarterback (and we are assuming he will be eligible for the entire season). Few Mountaineers if any have ever had the arm strength and talent that Grier brings to the table. He has a stable of elite running backs to work with and is playing in a system known for producing huge numbers in a league known for giving up big plays. Yes, please.

Name a breakout player.

Mitch Light: He's a trivia question we will be asking in a few years: Who was Stanford's running back before **BRYCE LOVE**? I'm kidding, of course — we will not forget about Christian McCaffrey — but Love will emerge as one of the top running backs in the nation in his first season as the starter. A year ago, he averaged 7.1 yards on his 111 carries as McCaffrey's understudy, and he filled in with 129 yards against Notre Dame and 119 in the bowl game vs. North Carolina when McCaffrey did not play.

Steven Lissan: With Michigan's defense returning only one starter and replacing standout linemen Taco Charlton, Ryan Glasgow and Chris Wormley, former No. 1 recruit **RASHAN GARY** is due for a breakout season. With a crowded depth chart, Gary was reduced to a part-time role as a true freshman in 2016. However, the limited snap count allowed him to learn and physically prepare for the week-to-week battles in the Big Ten. Gary recorded five tackles for a loss in 13 games last season. With a full-time snap count available as a starter now, look for Gary to emerge as one of the Big Ten's top defensive linemen.

Braden Gall: **NICK BOSA**, Ohio State. Urban Meyer has one of the nastiest defensive lines in all of college football, and Bosa is the next big star. As a true freshman, the younger Bosa brother registered 29 tackles, seven tackles for a loss and five sacks. His 6'4", 270-pound frame will only continue to develop.

Who is a true freshman you think will have a big impact?

Mitch Light: TY CHANDLER at Tennessee. John Kelly is the starting running back and should have a nice year for the Vols, but keep an eye on Chandler, the freshman from Nashville. My guess is he will play his way into the rotation — if not the starting role.

Steven Lissan: Dalvin Cook's impact on Florida State's offense won't be easy to replace. However, the Seminoles are still in great shape at running back with the arrival of CAM AKERS, ranked as the No. 2 prospect in the 247Sports Composite. He enrolled in time to compete in offseason workouts and led the team with 87 rushing yards in the spring game. He's got the size to be an every-down back and the speed to replicate Cook's big plays in 2017.



Give us a program on the rise.

Steven Lissan: OREGON. Even though the Ducks played for the national title in 2014, this program lost its way under former coach Mark Helfrich. New coach Willie Taggart inherited significant rebuilding projects at WKU and USF and turned both programs around in just a few years. He won't have to engineer a large-scale effort at Oregon, as the Ducks return a promising core of talent for 2017-18. Even with five-star facilities and flashy uniform combinations, attracting elite talent to Eugene is never easy. However, Taggart showed his ability to recruit by inking the No. 19 class in February, which ranked third among Pac-12 teams. Oregon lost some of the mystique or edge that Chip Kelly instilled during his tenure. Taggart will return the Ducks to the top of the Pac-12 North.

Braden Gall: TEXAS. I am buying whatever Tom Herman is selling. That program has all of the resources and talent for a quick turnaround. And while the Big 12 appears to be getting more competitive across the board, the depth of the conference still leaves something to be desired. It won't take long for Herman to make the Horns relevant again.

Name three Group of 5 head coaches who will be in Power 5 jobs next season.

Mitch Light: Philip Montgomery from Tulsa. Jason Candler from Toledo. Neal Brown from Troy.

Steven Lissan: Mike Norvell from Memphis. Neal Brown from Troy. Chad Morris from SMU.

Braden Gall: Bryan Harsin from Boise State. Craig Bohl from Wyoming. Scott Frost from UCF.



STEPHEN JOHNSON

What is the most interesting QB battle?

Mitch Light: It's not at the most high profile of schools, but I'm really surprised that Stephen Johnson is the favorite over Drew Barker at KENTUCKY. I know Johnson led the Cats to a bowl game last year, but Barker is a local kid who came in with a great reputation. If Johnson struggles early this year, don't be surprised if Barker steps in.

Steven Lissan: CLEMSON. Oddly enough, the Tigers are the third consecutive team to win a national title and open the following season with a QB battle. Filling the void left behind by Deshaun Watson isn't going to be easy for coach Dabo Swinney. However, this can be more of a team effort, as Clemson returns one of the nation's top defenses and is loaded with talent at the skill positions. Simply, the quarterback won't have to carry this team in 2017. A three-man battle will continue into fall practice. All three quarterbacks — Kelly Bryant, Zerrick Cooper and Hunter Johnson — bring dual-threat elements. Bryant has the edge in experience, but Johnson — a five-star prospect in the 2017 signing class — enrolled early to compete in spring ball and has the most upside.

Braden Gall: It has to be FLORIDA for me. Florida has somehow won back-to-back SEC East championships without much help from the quarterback position. Frankly, this position has been a major liability since Tim Tebow departed campus. Luke Del Rio, who started and wasn't awful last year until getting hurt, should be back in the competition by summer camp. Highly touted redshirt freshman Feleipe Franks left spring practice as the starter but is anything but a lock to face Michigan in his first career start in Week 1.

Name a program on the decline.

Mitch Light: ILLINOIS. The Fighting Illini have struggled in recent years, and I just don't sense a lot of positive momentum with this program. They regressed statistically on both offense and defense last season under Lovie Smith, and things don't look to be much better heading into the 2017 season. And with Minnesota and Purdue both making really good hires in the offseason, Illinois is a program that might get left behind in the Big Ten West.

Steven Lissan: OLE MISS. There's just too much uncertainty surrounding this program with an ongoing NCAA investigation and any pending penalties. And as recent history has showed, programs under NCAA scrutiny and facing a bowl ban have not performed well on the gridiron. A bowl ban, the prospect of a suspension for coach Hugh Freeze and the 5-7 record from 2016 do not add up to a recipe for success in 2017.

Braden Gall: UCLA. Obviously going from 10 wins to eight wins to four wins is a steep decline. But this one doesn't really make sense. The Bruins had the good fortune of going from Brett Hundley to Josh Rosen and have recruited at a solid level during a period of turmoil at USC. Yet, this program continues to slip in the Pac-12 South. Now, Rosen is likely in his final year, and the Trojans have the new Golden Boy of Los Angeles (Sam Darnold) under center.



TROJAN FORCE

BY JOEY KAUFMAN

Sam Darnold is leading USC's return to dominance

It wasn't how they drew it up.

Sam Darnold was hurrying after the football in the backfield. The handoff with running back Justin Davis had been botched, and so the ball tumbled onto the Coliseum grass. Before it could be swallowed up by a Colorado defensive lineman, Darnold scooped it up, then retreated almost 20 yards in an attempt to escape the pass rush.

Although he was in only his third start under center for USC, Darnold looked unhurried. After he had backpedaled, he kept staring downfield. He eyed one opening. Tyler Petite, a tight end, was standing alone on the far sideline, around the 10-yard line.

Petite caught a pass from the scrambling quarterback, romped down the sideline and crossed the goal line.

The crowd roared on the sunny October afternoon. On the Pac-12 Networks telecast, 13 seconds passed until the broadcasters uttered a word as if they were left trying to process the sequence.

The circuitous touchdown toss proved to be a sort of trademark for Darnold in his debut season last fall: unscripted and unflinching.

Afterward, USC coach Clay Helton was asked how he could instruct such a

young quarterback to deliver such a throw. It was simple. Keep the reins off. Let the redshirt freshman go. "Like I told him," Helton said, "drive it like you stole it."

Darnold kept driving. Three months later, in a wild comeback over Penn State in the Rose Bowl, Darnold threw the game-tying touchdown on a 27-yard pass to Deontay Burnett when he eyed the slot receiver ditching his route halfway through. Instead of a short comeback, Burnett dove toward the end zone. Darnold, noticing the adjustment, dropped a pass between three defensive backs.

The gumption pushed the Trojans toward their best season in almost a decade, since the Pete Carroll era, and Darnold's return represents the promise of a continued march to recapture past glory.

After Darnold replaced Max Browne following USC's 1-2 start, he led a nine-game winning streak to close the season, shattering the program's prominent freshman passing records along the way. Overnight, the program's fortunes changed.

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To understand Darnold's freewheeling, instinctive style, it would be instructive to return to a decision made by Jaime Ortiz, the varsity football coach at San Clemente (Calif.) High, prior to the 2012 season.

Ortiz had a quarterback quandary. There were two options as he looked to replace Utah-bound Travis Wilson: Darnold, a sophomore who had quarterbacked the freshman team the year prior, and Sean Donnelly, a steady senior who was Wilson's backup. With a tight race, Ortiz used one tiebreaker — Darnold's athleticism. "Unfortunately at that time in our program, we needed athletes," he says.

So, out of necessity, Darnold became a wide receiver and outside linebacker, playing both ways. Donnelly started at quarterback.

"We felt, hey, this gives our quarterback one more guy to throw to," Ortiz says. "Our best offense would have been Sam throwing to Sam, but unfortunately that's not really possible."

Darnold didn't start at quarterback until a season-ending injury to Donnelly later that fall, but the snaps elsewhere on the field provided a training ground. They prepared him to get hit. It's why he looks at ease in the pocket, comfortable sidestepping edge rushers or scrambling for a first down. He was prepped beyond the protected space of a pocket.

Coaches and analysts often remark about the natural feel he has once he takes the snap.

Peter Brouillet

In one of USC's spring practices in April, Darnold dodged a defensive end, took a couple steps to his left and side-armed a throw between two defenders, zipping the pass for a touchdown.

"I've always thought he's got a little bit of [Brett] Favre in him, to be honest with you," Helton says in reference to the former Green Bay Packers quarterback. "His creativity, his arm, his core strength to be able to make a throw, shuffling to your left and have that kind of arm angle."

As he gushes, Helton pauses for caution. "Brett was a great quarterback," he adds. "Not to say Sam's at that level yet, but he has those types of attributes."

Darnold also developed on the basketball courts in Orange County. Rather than participate in 7-on-7 passing tournaments during the winter months, a path often taken by the top-ranked prep quarterbacks, Darnold played on the varsity basketball team for San Clemente. He was twice named league MVP.

Sam comes from a family of college athletes. He is the son of a football player and a volleyball player. His older sister, Franki, became an all-conference outside

"His ability to see the floor directly translates to his ability to see the field," says Marc Popovich, the Tritons' boys basketball coach. "He would throw guys open in basketball just like he throws guys open in football."

Even then, he carried a knack for uncovering openings. "The thing that separates him from other guys is his ability to improvise, his ability to see those big plays potentially," Popovich adds, "to be able to take advantage of those when they're there." A sixth sense.

USC's quarterback shakeup began on the team's return flight from Stanford last season. In two high-profile games against Alabama and Stanford, the Trojans mustered only one offensive touchdown. A spark was needed, Helton reasoned as he mulled the switch.

On Sunday, the day after they returned home, Helton met with the two quarterbacks in his office. It was Darnold's turn.

But, with a Friday night game at Utah looming, there was a tight turnaround between the two conference road games.

"I had a lot of adrenaline throughout the week," Darnold says.

The Trojans went to Salt Lake City, where ultimately they lost to the Utes, 31-27, after giving up a game-winning touchdown in the waning seconds. But Darnold's teammates and coaches left impressed with his demeanor. He was unflappable in his first start, completing 18 of his 26 passes for 253 yards and running for a touchdown.

"You see it on his face," says Tyson Helton, the quarterbacks coach and Clay's younger brother. "He doesn't get rattled."

Darnold has an unassuming demeanor. His voice does not carry throughout Howard Jones Field, where the Trojans practice. He is quiet and soft spoken. He remains stoic, with a quiet confidence.

Teammates say they like his poise and leadership, a cool-headed approach that rubs off on them.

He has a personal touch, too. Near the end of a spring practice in March,

he lingered on the field with Daniel Imatorbhebhe, a sophomore tight end and one of his roommates. Darnold was demonstrating how to get a jump off his route at the line of scrimmage.

"One of the great things Sam does is he can be a great one-on-one leader, to pull a guy aside and communicate with him," Clay Helton says. "He does that as good as anybody I've seen. And then he picks and chooses his time. He's not one of those guys you're going to hear the entire camp or the entire day. He's one of those guys, when he speaks, everyone listens."

The night the Trojans won the Rose Bowl over Penn State, Ortiz shot a text message to Darnold. "For all intents and purposes," he wrote, "your life is completely changed from this point forward."

In a way, that has proven to be true.

Los Angeles has celebrated the Trojans' turnaround. Darnold and teammates were introduced and given standing ovations at Lakers and Kings home games at the Staples Center. They paid a visit to the city council, which honored them. No one on campus is more recognizable than the red-haired, 6'4" quarterback.

Darnold shrugs at his expanding profile, but he understands the reality of the growing acclaim and expectations in the nation's second-largest city.

"To an extent you got to block it out," Darnold says, "but at the same time, you should try to embrace it. It's good to embrace things like that. But also know that if you're ranked that high ... people are going to be coming for you. Every single day, they're going to bring their best game. That's the mindset we have to have."

Darnold recalls his upbringing as blue collar. He grew up in Capistrano Beach, Calif., a beach town tucked along the Pacific coast more than 60 miles south of USC's downtown campus. His father, Mike, is a plumber and contractor who worked late hours. Sam remembers his dad at times arising as early as 2 a.m. to fix broken pipes in the nearby Orange County hospitals. His mother, Chris, is a middle school physical education teacher. They kept him levelheaded.

Thirteen years ago, he sat in the stands at the Coliseum, watching the Trojans' dominance.

"In a way, it's kind of a role reversal," Ortiz says. "Sam has grown up a giant Matt Leinart fan, Reggie Bush fan, Pete Carroll fan, and now he's in those shoes."

Darnold, in fact, had a No. 11 jersey for Leinart, who in 2004 won the Heisman Trophy, becoming the school's second signal caller to do so, and led USC to a national championship.

Fans' hopes now rest with Darnold, as they long for the next breathtaking play.



“To an extent you got to block it out, but at the same time, you should try to embrace it. It's good to embrace things like that. But also know that if you're ranked that high ... people are going to be coming for you. Every single day, they're going to bring their best game. That's the mindset we have to have.”

— Sam Darnold, on USC's high expectations

hitter at Rhode Island. His grandfather, Dick Hammer, was on USC basketball's only Final Four team, in 1954.

For Sam, his vision and quick instincts trace to hoops.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE FADE?

Hated by fans and mocked on social media, "The Fade" never seems to work. So why does it have a prominent place in the college game?

BY BILL CONNELLY



Every fan has experienced it. Your team has the ball in scoring position. It's a big moment. And before you can say, "Run the dang ball!" your quarterback is cocking back to lob the football toward the back corner of the end zone. It lands two yards out of bounds, safely out of reach of the nearest offensive and defensive players. You fill with rage. You scream obscenities at your team's offensive coordinator as the placekicker trots onto the field to attempt a field goal.

Why would anybody possibly want to throw a fade route there? Doesn't the coach know that play never works?

You're right, by the way. The red-zone fade isn't an efficient play. According to Pro Football Focus, college teams had a success rate of only about 36 percent when attempting it during the 2016 season. That's right in line with pro averages of about 33 to 35 percent.

So what gives? Why does this play seem to be a base part of virtually every college offense even though the ball falls harm-

lessly to the turf about two-thirds of the time? Part of the draw, actually, is that it indeed falls to the turf.

Pro Football Focus data tells us that while there were 61 touchdowns thrown via red-zone fades in 2016, there were also only four interceptions. You might score a touchdown, you might draw a defensive pass interference penalty, or you might live to fight another down.

"It's a safe throw," says Nebraska offensive coordinator Danny Langsdorf. "The matchup is always an issue, but I think that, playing the odds, the completion rate certainly isn't high. But I'd rather give up that low-percentage fade throw [than something riskier]. And I can see why teams take away the inside and give you that outside throw. They want to see if you can complete it."

Langsdorf has coached at virtually every level of the game of football during his 20-year coaching career, calling plays for the CFL's Edmonton Eskimos (2000-01), Oregon State (2005-13) and now Nebraska (2015-present). He also worked as an offen-

Fred Vuich

sive assistant for the New Orleans Saints (2002-04) and New York Giants (2014). "When you have a guy like Eli Manning throwing to Odell Beckham Jr., that's a different deal than in college. You obviously have a better chance of completing it. And you'll see it a lot in Canada — you're at the 5, and it's like you're throwing a Go route [a more vertical cousin of the fade] instead of a fade because of the 20-yard end zone."

It can still serve a purpose in college, though, and it usually has to do with the matchups a defense is offering. "Defenses are going to challenge you," says Oklahoma State offensive coordinator Mike Yurcich. "They know it's a low-percentage throw, and they're going to factor that in. That's the fun part of competing."

Colorado State head coach Mike Bobo concurs. "A lot of times you see fades thrown, but originally a run was called. The defense has the box outnumbered, and you have 1-on-1 on the outside, so you throw that. It's your hot answer. It's never just 'I'm calling the fade.'"

"Philosophically, it's interesting what defenses are willing to give up based on how they feel they match up with you," Yurcich says. "We got challenged quite a bit this year even though we thought we were pretty good athletically at receiver. We continued to see press-man [coverage], even in the bowl game [against Colorado]."

Pressing college receivers at the line can work wonders for a defense, at least one that can actually pull it off. But OSU's receivers were dynamite in 2016, and they had Mason Rudolph throwing them the ball. Rudolph completed 57 percent of his passes in the red zone — "everything over 55 percent down there is a good mark," says Yurcich — for 13 touchdowns and just one interception.

Colorado State had one of the most reliable red-zone offenses in the country in 2016, averaging 5.5 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the opponent's 40). What does Bobo, a former offensive coordinator at Georgia, think about the fade? He credits a quality run game for a lot of the Rams' red-zone success, but he does employ the fade ... with a twist.

"When I was with Coach [Mark] Richt at Georgia, we were more 'Throw it into the bucket' [on fades] — kind of an old-school fade," he says. But they learned that completion percentages went up when they weren't aiming quite so deep in the corner of the end zone.

If you think about it, one of the hardest things about a good fade is that there are virtually three defenders on the play — the cornerback, the back of the end zone and the sideline. The old-school, in-the-bucket approach created a tiny window of success where a receiver could go up and get the ball. But

there's a throw that offers more margin for error. "We identified a spot in the red zone, five yards deep and about three yards from the sideline," Bobo says. "That was the spot we would throw it to. That still goes to the receiver's back shoulder, but the receiver is selling it like they're throwing to the back pylon."

Still, even with solid execution, this is a play the defense doesn't mind the offense attempting most of the time.

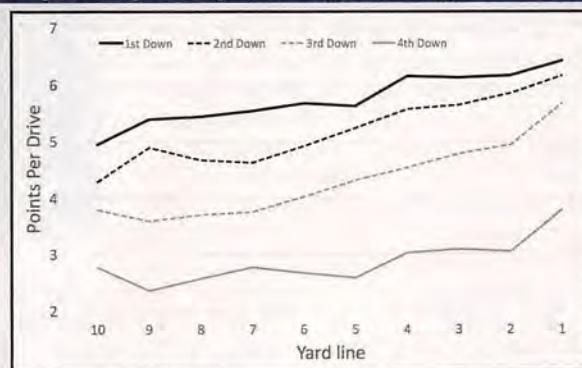
"You'll play that rare team that maybe throws it really well or has a big-time receiver you would worry about," says Northwestern defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz. In those instances, "You'd make sure you try to take that into consideration and maybe not give them as many of those." But generally, playing tight, taking away inside throws, and daring a QB to make a pinpoint lob is a good way to go because incomplete passes lead to field goals, and field goals don't usually beat you — touchdowns do.

"We talk about it all the time," Hankwitz says. "Field goals aren't going to beat you very often. So when we get inside the 12, that's when we go to our more specific coverage. We try to practice that specific situation."

"That's a big-time win if you hold them to a field goal," he continues. "Offenses are going to get down into the scoring area [in today's college football], but we know we need to win the red zone. Just because they've gotten down there doesn't mean they're going to score. Field goals are psychological, too — 'We've gotten down there three times, and we only got nine points?'"

Hankwitz is right that field goals won't do much damage, and he's right about the low percentage of the fade. You do get one throwaway down, though.

Expected points per drive, goal-to-go situation



On average, if you gain zero yards on first-and-goal, you only lose about 0.6 expected points. For instance, on first-and-goal from the 4, FBS offenses averaged 6.15 points per possession; on second-and-goal, they averaged 5.56.

That isn't a significant drop-off, but things get dicey from there. The average drop grows to 0.9 expected points with an incomplete pass on second-and-goal. Example: second-and-goal from the 7 was worth 4.61 points in 2016, but third-and-goal from the 7 was worth 3.73.

On third-and-goal, things take on a far more all-or-nothing quality. A team's expected point total drops by about 1.5 points on average with no gain on third-and-goal and by 1.75 points inside the 5.

"Earlier downs is where you'd like to see them," Langsdorf says, in reference to the hated fade.

The lesson: Don't curse your offensive coordinator for throwing a harmless fade — as long as it's on first down. If it's third down, curse up a storm.

"It's a safe throw. The matchup is always an issue, but I think that, playing the odds, the completion rate certainly isn't high. But I'd rather give up that low-percentage fade throw [than something riskier]. And I can see why teams take away the inside and give you that outside throw. They want to see if you can complete it."

— Nebraska offensive coordinator Danny Langsdorf

Upon Further Review:

POWER 5 COACHING REPORT CARD

From Home Runs to Busts to Stepping Stones, we assess every Power 5 hire from 2012-16 BY MATT HINTON

In 2012, the SEC's perceived dominance over the rest of college football was an unquestioned fact of life in the sport. Five years later, the conference with the most money, most fertile recruiting base and most passionate following looks like a shadow of its best self, reduced to Alabama and the 13 Dwarves. What the heck happened?

There are enough different answers to that to keep radio call-in shows in business for another five years. But a good place to start is on the sideline: Twelve of the SEC's 14 teams have replaced their head coach in that span — all of them except Bama and Mississippi State — with underwhelming returns, to say the least. Meanwhile, the exponential inflation in coaches' salaries has only thrown the mediocrity into high relief.

At least five SEC coaches hired in the 2012-13 cycles (Arkansas' Bret Bielema, Auburn's Gus Malzahn, Ole Miss' Hugh Freeze, Tennessee's Butch Jones, and Texas A&M's Kevin Sumlin) are facing obvious make-or-break campaigns in 2017, with the implicit promise that not all of them can survive another year. Many of their colleagues are only a losing season or two from the chopping block themselves. With Les Miles' ouster at LSU, the only remaining coach with tenure is Nick Saban.

To put that situation into context, we've ranked the eleven full-time SEC hires from 2012-16 alongside the rest of the hires in the Power 5 conferences in the same span, divided into seven categories based on their performance to date. One positive note for the conference: None of the most recent hires has been so disastrous that they've already been fired. By this time next year, though, that won't be the case.

HOME RUNS

Nationally relevant with no end in sight:

- 1. Urban Meyer, Ohio State (2012-)** Meyer picked up in his home state right where he left off at Florida: Five years in, the Buckeyes have the best overall winning percentage in the nation during his tenure and a national championship to show for it.
- 2. Jim Harbaugh, Michigan (2015-)** The Wolverines came up a couple plays short of a playoff berth in Harbaugh's second season,



URBAN MEYER

but the sense of forward momentum that accompanied his return to his alma mater is as palpable as ever. Even in a rebuilding year, which 2017 figures to be, the question isn't so much if Michigan will break through in the foreseeable future, but when.

3. Chris Petersen, Washington (2014-) Unlike most coaches making the step up from a mid-major program, Petersen was arguably taking a bigger gamble on Washington when he agreed to leave Boise State than U-Dub was on him. On the heels of last year's playoff run, though, the move looks like a mutual master stroke: The Huskies are atop the Pac-12 pecking order for the first time in ages, and suddenly the national title shot that kept slipping through Petersen's grasp in Boise looks like it could be within reach in Seattle on a regular basis.

4. James Franklin, Penn State (2014-) Before Penn State's late surge in 2016, Franklin was facing the very real possibility of entering Year 4 on the hot seat. Instead, the Nittany Lions return the vast majority of the lineup that stormed to the Big Ten title, with legitimate designs on reestablishing the program as a perennial contender.

5. Gus Malzahn, Auburn (2013-) The head coach at Auburn is never more than a bad year or two from the chopping block (see: Terry Bowden, Tommy Tuberville, Gene Chizik), especially when most of the oxygen in the state of Alabama is being sucked up by



BOBBY PETRINO

the Crimson Tide. Sure enough, Malzahn faced legitimate questions about his future last fall before the Tigers hit their stride en route to the Sugar Bowl. Regardless of when or how the Malzahn era eventually ends, though, or whatever else happens to unfold in the meantime, the Kick Six-fueled run to the BCS Championship Game in 2013 will always be worth it.

HOLDING STEADY

On the right track, but yet to win big:

1. Bobby Petrino, Louisville (2014-) Petrino's second go-round in the Derby City hasn't yet achieved the heights of his first, which included the only top-10 finishes in school history, in 2004 and 2006. But the Cardinals were well on their way last year, rising as high as No. 3 in the AP poll before losing the thread in mid-November. And as long as Lamar Jackson is in the fold there's no reason they can't still make good on that promise.

2. Paul Chryst, Wisconsin (2015-) So far, Chryst's Badgers look exactly like what we've come to expect from Wisconsin — efficient on offense, fundamentally sound on defense, overachieving athletically — which was precisely the goal.

3. Mike Leach, Washington State (2012-) It took a little longer than expected, but with back-to-back winning seasons in 2015-16, Leach has fulfilled his mission of pulling Wazzu out of a decade-long tailspin. Whether he'll ever have the talent at his disposal to seriously contend for a Pac-12 title is another question.

4. Larry Fedora, North Carolina (2012-) Five years and 40 wins later, Carolina is on much sturdier footing than it was when Fedora arrived in the midst of a major NCAA investigation. Still, the eternal question remains: At what point will eight wins a year at a program with UNC's resources no longer be enough?

5. Mike MacIntyre, Colorado (2013-) MacIntyre won as many games in his fourth year in Boulder (10) as he won in his first three years combined, a testament to the patience he was afforded along the way. Keeping the Buffs in the black after a decade-plus of futility may require just as much patience.

6. Jim McElwain, Florida (2015-) Back-to-back SEC East titles speak for themselves. But McElwain's teams haven't made any apparent headway on Florida State or Alabama at the end of the schedule, and even within the division they've arguably lost ground to Tennessee. Until McElwain finds a quarterback he can trust, the Gators are just treading water.

7. Butch Jones, Tennessee (2013-) The 2016 Vols were erratic, combustible, and resilient — often on the same afternoon — a combination that tempered disappointment with sheer exhaustion. The result was a missed opportunity in a watered-down division, but also a reminder of how far the Vols have come on Jones' watch.

8. Bret Bielema, Arkansas (2013-) It's probably too soon to suggest Bielema is facing a make-or-break year on the heels of three consecutive winning seasons, especially given the post-Bobby Petrino turmoil he inherited. But simply maintaining the status quo isn't going to keep the critics at bay, either.

9. Dave Clawson, Wake Forest (2014-) The Demon Deacons quietly climbed above .500 in Clawson's third season, finishing with their first winning record (7-6) since 2008. That's all Wake has ever asked for in football, and any coach who can deliver on a semi-regular basis has a chance to be around for a good long while.

10. Derek Mason, Vanderbilt (2014-) Mason's third season in Nashville included wins over Georgia, Ole Miss and Tennessee and a berth in the Independence Bowl, which by Vanderbilt standards qualifies as a banner year. The Commodores aren't going to repeat their historic success under Mason's predecessor, James Franklin, anytime soon, but as long as they don't feel permanently consigned to the SEC basement, Mason probably isn't going anywhere, either.

11. Mark Stoops, Kentucky (2013-) Stoops signed a two-year contract extension in March that will ostensibly keep him at Kentucky through 2022, a significant vote of confidence in a coach who looked like a dead man walking last September. If he actually manages to survive that long — a big if, given UK's perpetual struggle against mediocrity and worse — it will make him the longest-tenured coach in school history.

TRENDING UP

Fledgling tenures off to a promising start:

1. Justin Fuente, Virginia Tech (2016-) Fuente struck an optimistic note in Blacksburg, erasing the mediocrity of the final years of the Frank Beamer era en route to 10 wins and an ACC Coastal title — Virginia Tech's first since 2011.

2. Clay Helton, USC (2015-) Helton's debut ran the gamut, from the depths of a 1-3 September — including, most memorably, a 52-6 humiliation at the hands of Alabama in the season opener — to the heights of a nine-game winning streak following freshman Sam Darnold's promotion to QB1. With Darnold entrenched in Year 2, it's a safe bet that, a) the Trojans will be universally hyped (yes, again) as playoff frontrunners; and b) this time they'll actually deserve it.

3. Mark Richt, Miami (2016-) In the long run, a 9-4 campaign that ends in a Russell Athletic Bowl victory is merely a footnote. But Richt's first season at his alma mater was a clear step forward, yielding Miami's first top-25 finish since 2009. And it was arguably closer to a genuine breakthrough than the rest of the country realized: Three of the Canes' four losses came in games in which they led or had a legitimate chance to win in the final two minutes.

THE THRILL IS GONE

Entrenched, but perhaps not for much longer:

1. Kevin Sumlin, Texas A&M (2012-) In retrospect, the initial enthusiasm of the Johnny Manziel years is beginning to look more like a curse: The lofty expectations (and even loftier recruiting rankings) that followed have fizzled in three consecutive 8-5 finishes, each one more deflating than the last.

2. Hugh Freeze, Ole Miss (2012-) Freeze's best seasons, in 2014 and '15, rank among the best at Ole Miss in decades. Was that run worth the subsequent NCAA sanctions that have left him hanging by a thread? Will the high of back-to-back wins over Alabama outlast the stigma of Laremy Tunsil's gas mask?

3. Jim Mora, UCLA (2012-) There's no way to separate UCLA's 4-8 flop in 2016 from the shoulder injury that sidelined quarterback Josh Rosen at midseason — the Bruins finished 1-5 in his absence — and it's entirely possible that Rosen's return will be enough to flip that record this fall. Still, after years of highly touted recruiting classes, there was no excuse for such a sudden, total collapse.

4. Dave Doeren, N.C. State (2013-) The Wolfpack have settled into a reliably mediocre niche after bottoming out in Doeren's first season, which might be just fine if "reliably mediocre niche" hadn't been exactly what got his predecessor, Tom O'Brien, fired. Another .500-ish effort in year five will be one too many to justify a year six.

5. Todd Graham, Arizona State (2012-) The Sun Devils dropped seven of their last eight in 2016, yielding at least 37 points in all seven losses. Only one other FBS defense allowed more yards per play. When the status quo is that bad, even steep improvement might not be enough to keep Graham off the chopping block.

6. Rich Rodriguez, Arizona (2012-) Rich Rod achieved enough in his first four seasons in Tucson, including a Pac-12 South title in 2014, to write off last year's 3-9 collapse as a mulligan. But certainly not enough to buy him another.

7. Steve Addazio, Boston College (2013-) Addazio's supporters can make the case that he's stabilized a program that hit rock bottom under his predecessor, Frank Spaziani, and established an identity built around the defense; critics can argue that the Eagles are stagnant, having yet to top seven wins on Addazio's watch, and remain painfully conservative on offense.

8. Kliff Kingsbury, Texas Tech (2013-) In one sense, at least, Kingsbury has done exactly what he was hired to do by cultivating an up-tempo, pass-happy attack that has the potential to threaten records every time it takes the field. Explosive as the "Air Raid" continues to be, though, the defense has been equally flammable, yielding at least 41 points per game in each of the past three seasons.

JURY'S OUT

Fledgling tenures yet to move the needle either way:

1. Pat Narduzzi, Pitt (2015-) Narduzzi appears to be settling in for the long haul at a program that had seen three other head coaches come and go in the previous four years, and his second season was highlighted by landmark wins over the eventual Big Ten champ (Penn State) and national champ (Clemson).

2. Kirby Smart, Georgia (2016-) UGA fans were certainly hoping for more from Smart's debut campaign than an uninspiring 8-5 slog, one that often felt like a rerun of the Mark Richt era at its worst. But the Bulldogs did finish strong and sustained the momentum into the new year by inking a top-five recruiting class.



KEVIN SUMLIN

3. Will Muschamp, South Carolina (2016-) The Gamecocks arguably exceeded expectations in 2016 by eking out six wins, a clear step forward from the 3-9 debacle in 2015. Even better: The leading passer (Jake Bentley) and rusher (Rico Dowdle) were both true freshmen, and the top two wide receivers (Deebo Samuel and Bryan Edwards) are back as well.

4. Mike Riley, Nebraska (2015-) The Cornhuskers seemed well on their way back to national relevance in Riley's second year, climbing as high as No. 7 in the AP poll on the strength of a 7-0 start. From there, they endured blowout losses at the hands of Ohio State, Iowa and Tennessee, ultimately failing to crack the final Top 25 for the fourth year in a row.

5. D.J. Durkin, Maryland (2016-) There's not much to glean from Durkin's first go-round as a head coach, a nondescript, 6-7 campaign without a victory over an opponent with a winning record and a handful of straight-up massacres against the Big Ten's elite. But it was an improvement on Maryland's 3-9 record in 2015, which if nothing else suggests the program is on a less obviously doomed path than it was before.

6. Gary Andersen, Oregon State (2015-) Andersen's decision to trade a high-profile gig at Wisconsin for the relative obscurity of Corvallis seemed like a bizarre move at the time, and his 6-18 mark in the meantime hasn't exactly vindicated the choice.

7. Dino Babers, Syracuse (2016-) The first two-thirds of Babers' debut went well enough, highlighted by an out-of-the-blue upset over Virginia Tech en route to a 4-4 start. After a four-game skid to close the year, though, the end result was just another in a long line of forgettable Syracuse campaigns over the past decade.

8. Matt Campbell, Iowa State (2016-) The Cyclones were more competitive in Campbell's first season than their 3-9 record suggested, for whatever the distinction is worth. Even at Iowa State, "feisty in defeat" will eventually have to yield to some actual wins.

9. Bronco Mendenhall, Virginia (2016-) Why did Mendenhall bail on a stable, decade-long tenure at BYU, in his home state, to take over a perennial also-ran on the opposite side of the continent? Money? A new challenge? Some combination thereof? Whatever it was, there must have been plenty of moments during last year's 2-10 slog at UVa when he wondered the same thing himself.

10. Barry Odom, Missouri (2016-) Not that anyone expected Odom to guide Mizzou back to the SEC title game in Year 1, but obviously a last-place finish in a watered-down East Division doesn't lend itself to much positive spin.

11. Lovie Smith, Illinois (2016-) Beleaguered Illini fans were ecstatic to land Smith, a longtime NFL vet who joined Jim Harbaugh last summer as the only active college coaches with a Super Bowl appearance on their résumés. But his first team was indistinguishable from the cellar-dwelling outfits that came before.

12. David Beaty, Kansas (2015-) Beaty knew full well what he was getting into when he accepted one of the most thankless jobs in big-time college sports, and nothing about his 2-22 record so far suggests he's on his way to escaping the cycle of futility that has defined Kansas football for decades.

13. Chris Ash, Rutgers (2016-) Ash's first season ended on a nine-game losing streak in which his team was outscored by more than 30 points per game. At least there's, uh, nowhere to go but up?

STEPPING STONES

Respectable but brief tenures cut short by better offers:

1. Bill O'Brien, Penn State (2012-13) O'Brien managed the immediate fallout of the Sandusky scandal, holding the line just long enough to make a respectable handoff to James Franklin when the Houston Texans came calling two years later. Eight starters in last year's Rose Bowl signed on to play for O'Brien.

2. Gary Andersen, Wisconsin (2013-14) Andersen's abbreviated run in Madison went just fine, yielding 19 wins in two years, but the Badgers certainly aren't lamenting his absence — Wisconsin is still winning under Paul Chryst while Andersen is struggling to get Oregon State out of the Pac-12 basement.

3. Paul Chryst, Pitt (2012-14) So far, Chryst's departure from Pitt for Wisconsin looks like a win-win on that end, too: He gets to oversee a stable program at his alma mater, and the Panthers have won more games in each of Pat Narduzzi's first two seasons than they did in any of their three years under Chryst.

BUSTS

The not-so-dearly departed:

1. Mark Helfrich, Oregon (2013-16) Helfrich won 33 games in his first three seasons, mentored Marcus Mariota and brought the Ducks to the cusp of a national title — a good run, all in all, even if the high points have already been retroactively credited to the foundation laid by Helfrich's old boss, Chip Kelly. But whatever remained of that foundation was reduced to rubble in 2016.

2. Tracy Claeys, Minnesota (2015-16) Claeys assumed coaching duties from Jerry Kill when health concerns forced Kill into retirement, and it's debatable how much job security he ever really had. It's not debatable, however, that Claeys' first full season was among the Gophers' best in decades, yielding a 9-4 record, or that he almost certainly would have kept his job if not for his tone-deaf response to the suspension of multiple players for the Holiday Bowl as part of a university investigation into sexual assault.

3. Sonny Dykes, Cal (2013-16) Dykes left Cal in better shape than he found it, which isn't saying much given what he inherited in 2013. After three losing seasons in four years, the decision to pull the plug in December felt mutual. Dykes will be more at home this season in his native Texas, working as an analyst for TCU.

4. Charlie Strong, Texas (2014-16) Strong wasn't the Saban-caliber star UT boosters assumed would be leaping at the opportunity to succeed Mack Brown. But the talent on hand wasn't what it used to be, either, and had a bad habit of playing down to the likes of Texas Tech, Iowa State, and — Lord help them — even Kansas. Three consecutive losing seasons at Texas are three too many.

5. Randy Edsall, Maryland (2011-15) Edsall lasted four-and-a-half seasons, posted a pair of winning (7-6) records in 2013-14, and helped oversee the Terps' transition from the ACC to the Big Ten. A few years from now I'm not sure even Maryland fans will remember any of the above.

6. Scott Shafer, Syracuse (2013-15) The Shafer era started promisingly enough, with a 7-6 campaign in 2013, before turning sour. His three-year tenure is the shortest at Syracuse since 1948.

7. Darrell Hazell, Purdue (2013-16) Hazell recorded nine wins in three-and-a-half years, only three of them coming in Big Ten games; four of the other six came at the expense of FCS opponents. The Boilers never achieved an identity beyond "doormat."

8. Steve Sarkisian, USC (2014-15) Sarkisian coached just 18 games at USC before his apparent alcoholism overwhelmed his job. The Trojans are on more solid footing today under Clay Helton, and hopefully Sarkisian is, too, as the new offensive coordinator with the Atlanta Falcons.

9. Charlie Weis, Kansas (2012-14) Weis gambled on an infusion of junior college recruits to upgrade the Jayhawks' talent level, lost that bet and was shown the door in short order, leaving the depth chart in even more dire straits than it was before. At least he was paid handsomely!

10. Tim Beckman, Illinois (2012-14) The Beckman era was defined by a dismal record on the field (12-25) and an even worse record off it, ending in scandal when a university investigation found he forced some injured players to practice and pressured medical staff to clear others more quickly. When you leave your fan base nostalgic for Ron Zook, you come in at the bottom of the list.



MARK HELFRICH

SPYING *Eyes*

BY JON SOLOMON

*The WakeyLeaks incident has only amped up coaches' already rampant **paranoia***



AP

Congratulations, WakeyLeaks. Wake Forest's game-plan breach from a highly unlikely source — radio analyst and former assistant coach Tommy Elrod — managed to make already-paranoid college football coaches even more paranoid.

That is no small achievement.

"You don't have nearly enough time [to talk] about why college football coaches are so paranoid," former UCLA, Colorado and Washington coach Rick Neuheisel says, laughing. "The paranoia should be the subject of a long, long thesis."

No detail is immune from being closely guarded by college football coaches as if it were a military secret. Coaches go to great lengths to protect schemes, formations, personnel, injuries and trick plays from outside eyes.

Practices open to the media are now typically a distant memory. Television announcers who watch practice and receive inside access to the team are closely scrutinized by coaches. Covered fences prevent prying eyes from seeing anything at practice. During games, coaches even cover their mouths when talking to their players or into their headsets in case any alert lip-readers might be watching.

Conditions get placed on beat reporters during their only viewing time — the first 15 minutes of practices, which essentially amounts to stretching and catching a few passes. Some schools ask that media not report who isn't practicing until they speak with the head coach, even if the head coach isn't available for interviews after practice. Some teams practice on faraway fields during the rare time the media can watch.

Now along comes WakeyLeaks, a scandal in which an insider provided specific strategic information over a three-year period to Louisville, Army and Virginia Tech before Wake Forest's games against those teams. Though WakeyLeaks was a very unusual example of football espionage, the paranoia needle has now gotten dialed up even more for coaches — and maybe for good reason.

"I think coaches are paranoid and have reason to be because it's a very competitive business," says Gerry DiNardo, a former LSU, Vanderbilt and Indiana coach. "What somebody else does has an impact on your program. I'm not sure it's that direct in other businesses. If I have an Italian restaurant, what the steakhouse does doesn't really impact me. If someone wants a steak, they're not going to my restaurant. That [football] play they're running? That impacts my business. That recruit they're

talking to? That impacts my business as well."

Coaches have all sorts of stories that feed into their paranoia and their desire to tighten restrictions.

In 2015, then-Georgia coach Mark Richt approached an AL.com reporter at practice during the week of the Georgia-Alabama game. The reporter was one of several journalists shooting video of receivers running routes with quarterbacks near the end of a media-viewing period.

"[Richt] asked what was being filmed and asked that tight shots of certain routes not be shown," AL.com wrote a couple of days before Alabama routed Georgia 38-10. "The coach said he didn't want Alabama seeing what they were doing at that moment. Richt then asked all video recordings cease. The three viewing periods were open to photographers and videographers. Restrictions on what could be filmed were not listed on an advisory to media viewing practice."

When Mike MacIntyre became Colorado's coach, he initially allowed the majority of his practices to be open to the team's fans. That lasted one season.

"I got burned," MacIntyre said in 2015 about open practices, according to BuffZone.com. "Last fall camp I did more, but I also got burned off that. I know for a fact, but I definitely want to do it."

As LSU's interim coach last season, Ed Orgeron opened practices far more than predecessor Les Miles had. Miles hadn't opened an in-season practice to reporters since at least 2006. Orgeron opened certain periods, especially on Mondays, which he called "Tell the Truth Monday" for coaches to honestly analyze players' mistakes.

Whether Orgeron will stay this open as LSU's permanent head coach remains to be seen. In an interview last fall, Orgeron said he wanted to be more open with the media.

DiNardo had open practices everywhere he coached. During the week of an LSU-Georgia game, then-Bulldogs coach Jim Donnan called to tell DiNardo he needed to read some blogs.

"They were telling everyone what we're doing at practice," DiNardo says.

Neuheisel used to have open practices. In hindsight, he now says he wishes he had been more secretive as a college head coach.

"If anything, I was too loose," says Neuheisel, who is now a commentator for CBS Sports and Sirius XM. "Anybody could come to practice. I never had a closed practice. I didn't have the media not allowed in. I didn't hide injuries until late in my career because everybody else was hiding them. I don't know if people realize this

"You don't have nearly enough time about why college football coaches are so paranoid. The paranoia should be the subject of a long, long thesis."

— Rick Neuheisel, former UCLA, Colorado and Washington coach

or not, but if you lose a head job, it's hard to get back. I think as salaries are going up and expectations go up with them, you're not going to be careless."

Neuheisel questions the location of a new hotel built right next to UCLA's football practice field.

"There are windows not perfectly designed to look at the field, but without much craning of the neck, you can see it," Neuheisel says. "Every coach is going, 'You're building what?' It's a very questionable decision when you're sitting there wondering who's occupying those rooms."

Such is life for paranoid football coaches. Potential spies lurk around every corner.

Another careful calculation for coaches is which staffs they invite onto campus for offseason X's-and-O's chats. College football is very much a copycat business. One innovative idea turns into another, and before you know it, the coach with the original idea now must defend against it.

"I always stressed, 'Let's not share our ideas with the wrong people,'" DiNardo says. "When I was at LSU, Brad Scott was at South Carolina. We didn't play each other on the schedule. He asked to send his offensive staff to LSU during an off week. I said, 'Brad, I just can't do it.' You never know where your coaches will be in the future."

Sometimes coaches even take advantage of visits with other staffs to help their own recruiting.

In 2013, Clemson brought in a strong recruiting class but lost highly recruited defensive linemen Carl Lawson and Montravius Adams to Auburn at the very end. Clemson assistant coach Jeff Scott said Lawson and Adams told him that Auburn's superior housing for athletes was a major factor in their choices.

So one day after meeting with Auburn coach Gus Malzahn's staff, Scott decided to see the Auburn apartments for himself. He snuck into one of them and asked a player if he could take some pictures.

"He didn't know who I was, but I'm in there taking pictures of his room," Scott says.

Scott showed the pictures to Clemson coach Dabo Swinney and university officials. Now the university is in the process of spending \$2 million on renovations for an apartment complex that houses football players and non-athletes.

Paranoia knows no limits for college

football coaches, even when considering rules changes. Neuheisel remembers how he once got considerable blowback from fellow coaches about a rule that most of them wanted, but they were suspicious because he was the one proposing it.

At a meeting for the American Football Coaches Association, Neuheisel proposed more leniency for medical redshirt players. By limiting a medical redshirt to no more than three games, he wanted players who got hurt early in the season to have the ability to return later to beef up rosters as injuries mount. Most teams just have a doctor fudge that the player was hurt the whole year anyway when in fact he can often return, Neuheisel says.

"Every head coach looked at me like I was trying to pull a fast one on them," Neuheisel says. "It's the perfect scenario of the world of paranoia. They think because Rick Neuheisel has this reputation of being creative, the rule is a deal-breaker. I realized then the deal wasn't so much the rule I proposed, it was me. They didn't trust me."

After that incident, Neuheisel took a different approach with rules. One year at the Pac-12 coaches' meetings, Neuheisel wanted to increase the conference's travel-squad numbers (60 players per team) closer to the Big Ten and SEC limits (70 players).

But Neuheisel knew he was toxic, especially in a room with so many big egos, such as Stanford's Jim Harbaugh and USC's Carroll. So Neuheisel had then-Oregon State coach Mike Riley pitch the idea.

"Mike is the nicest guy in the world, so he pitched it to the ADs and we got 70," Neuheisel says. "Had Rick Neuheisel pitched it, we'd still be at 60. No one looked at Mike Riley and ever thought there was a hidden ball trick going on."

Harbaugh now faces this same paranoia at Michigan. He maneuvers through the NCAA rule book, such as taking the Wolverines to spring practice in Florida and Italy and holding summer satellite camps around the country to look for players.

"He'll never get any legislation passed

A WAKEYLEAKS PRIMER

The oddity of the Wake Forest espionage scandal provided lots of laughs. Since when do radio analysts provide inside information to the opposing team? The story even had a clever and funny name — WakeyLeaks.

But in reality, there's nothing funny about what happened. The story broke after Wake Forest lost to Louisville last season. Wake Forest radio analyst Tommy Elrod, a former Demon Deacons player and assistant coach, had shared several plays with Louisville offensive coordinator Lonnie Galloway.

The Demon Deacons learned they were compromised the day before the game. At Louisville's stadium, they found documents of plays they had used in practice but not games. There were formations

and alignments Wake Forest had never run but had planned to use against Louisville. Instead, the special plays got scrapped once the coaches realized their opponent knew a little bit too much.

"After the game, our players were upset," Wake Forest coach **Dave Clawson** said last December. "They wanted to know why did we work on all these things, why did we practice them all week and not use them? They felt we had not given them best the opportunity to win the game. So we had a team meeting and told them something was compromised, we're not sure how."

Text messages obtained by CBSSports.com strongly suggest Galloway and Elrod met the night before the game. Phone



Margaret Bowles

he wants," Neuheisel said. "But if you go get Mike Riley from Nebraska, you've got a hell of a chance to get it done. Case in point, I saw it first-hand."

Injuries may be the most common area where paranoia sets in for coaches. Understandably, for competitive purposes, coaches don't want to identify who's hurt and what body part.

Yet the NFL has required weekly injury reports for years. One major reason to do so is to attempt to limit inside information that could be used for gambling purposes and potentially compromise the integrity of games.

In college football, injury reports are a free-for-all. There is no commissioner for the entire sport to tell people what injuries they have to disclose. Some conferences have tried to create injury reporting standards through the years, but they really haven't worked.

"Who wants to volunteer that the quarterback isn't good?" DiNardo says. "I think now with the [health privacy] law and all that, the coaches can hide behind that. I

don't like when a coach is sarcastic about it — upper body or lower body. I'd rather hear, 'None of your business.' I hate when a coach uses it to stick it up somebody's butt when a reporter is trying to do their job. A reporter has to ask if the quarterback is back."

DiNardo is now in the media business as a commentator for the Big Ten Network. He feels like a beat reporter when he visits Big Ten schools.

"You'll be amazed what they tell me and what I see, but I feel it's privileged," DiNardo says. "I think the NFL is different. As long as you're under the education umbrella, I don't feel like I'm sacrificing my principle if I say, 'Of course, Urban [Meyer], I won't say Mike Weber sustained an injury in practice.' But if I'm covering the Bears, don't tell me what I can or can't report."

All of this raises an interesting question: Why do football coaches seem more paranoid than in almost any other sport?

"I think there's more plays, more secrets," Neuheisel says. "I don't mean to

make light of basketball, but you hear guys say, 'We guarded better.' It's not like we sprung different coverages or something. There's just more intel, more stuff that we do that's different of how we do it. Everybody's got film.

"Because football plays change, the coverage that we call on any one play is going to look different based on what you did against that coverage. It's all a response to what the offense did to create that coverage. All your principles, all your game-planning is kind of a hush-hush thing you really believe in. You're always suspicious to what someone's motivation is, and am I giving up an advantage? Paranoia is the No. 1 reason we haven't had a change to the signing date. They can't figure it out if it's better or not for each coach, because if it's not better, it could cost you."

Now radio analysts employed by the university will be subject to future scrutiny. You can't fault the coaches for this paranoia.

Thanks, WakeyLeaks.

records for Galloway showed he initiated a 25-minute call with Elrod three days before the game. That contradicted Louisville athletic director Tom Jurich's statement that it was Elrod who called Galloway the week of the game.

Jurich initially tried to downplay any blame Galloway deserved in the incident, even calling the story a distraction for Louisville's bowl preparation. That logic didn't work publicly. So Louisville, which joined Virginia Tech in being fined \$25,000 by the ACC due to WakeyLeaks, suspended Galloway for Louisville's bowl game.

Army and Virginia Tech also received insider information from Elrod. Army fined defensive coordinator Jay Bateman \$25,000 and suspended him two weeks in the offseason for his role in WakeyLeaks. Georgia fined assistant Shane Beamer \$25,000 because of information he received as a Hokies assistant from Elrod.

It's common for coaches to share information about teams they played or used to coach. But WakeyLeaks reached a new level because it involved insider information provided by someone connected to the team at the time of the espionage.

"Go back to the Patriots and SpyGate," former UCLA coach Rick Neuheisel says. "If you know what formations and personnel groups people are doing, you've got a huge advantage. Stories came out that these

“

I'd like to say I'm holier than thou and I wouldn't accept the information. But in the heat of the battle, you're trying to save your job and need a win, people do desperate things."

— Tommy Bowden, former Clemson coach

[Louisville, Army and Virginia Tech] coaches didn't write anything down when they were told. But guys are getting suspended and fined. I'd say there was probably a lot more fire than smoke. It's unseemly for the coaches. I was shocked that at a place like Army that a head didn't roll."

Former Clemson coach Tommy Bowden says he used to call graduate assistants who left other programs and "kind of pump them for information." But getting information from an in-house mole who's still at the school?

"I've never heard that happen," Bowden says. "If he left the program and went somewhere else, that's normal sharing information. But not in-house. It just ruined the guy's career. Originally, when it happened, I thought [Bobby] Petrino or his assistants went to the locker room and looked in garbage cans [and found Wake

Forest's game plan]. Most everybody does that."

So what should a coach do when an in-house mole calls with info?

"I'd like to say I'm holier than thou and I wouldn't accept the information," Bowden says. "But in the heat of the battle, you're trying to save your job and need a win, people do desperate things — even Christian guys like me who pray for forgiveness instead of permission. I've never heard it to this extent."

Former LSU coach Gerry DiNardo says he thinks he would not have accepted the plays. "I can't judge anyone," he says. "I certainly can't condemn anyone. I just hope like hell if I was faced with that I would do the right thing because of how competitive and paranoid the game is."

— Jon Solomon

TOP 50

COLLEGE PLAYERS of the **ATHLON** ERA

The inaugural edition of *Athlon Sports* was published in 1967, the same year that a running back named O.J. Simpson led the USC Trojans to the national championship. As we celebrate 50 years of covering the sport, we thought it would be fun to take a deep dive and compile a ranking of the top 50 players of the *Athlon Sports* era. This wasn't easy. Our checklist contained more than 300 players, each of whom received either first-team All-America honors or won a major postseason award. To help us sort through the list of all-time greats, we assembled a panel of college football experts (see box next page). Each member submitted a list of top 50 players, and we used a simple formula to tabulate the final rankings: A player received 50 points for a first-place vote down to one point for a 50th-place vote. To be eligible, a player had to have played at least one season of college football between 1967 and 2016.

1. HERSCHEL WALKER

RB, Georgia, 1980-82

Walker stampeded onto the college football scene in his first game by barreling over Tennessee's Bill Bates, and from there, his legend only grew. The 1982 Heisman winner led the Bulldogs to a 33-3 record and the 1980 national championship during his three seasons in Athens, rushing for 5,259 yards — still an SEC record — and 49 touchdowns.



Walker: UGA Athletics; Others: Athlon Sports Archives

2. BARRY SANDERS

RB, Oklahoma State, 1986-88

The dazzlingly elusive Sanders had arguably the greatest individual season in college football history, rushing for 2,850 yards on 7.6 yards per carry and 42 touchdowns (including the bowl game) in his Heisman campaign of 1988. He scored 55 total touchdowns in his three-year career despite having only one season as the Cowboys' featured back.

3. ARCHIE GRIFFIN

RB, Ohio State, 1972-75

The only two-time winner of the Heisman Trophy, Griffin was a workhorse for Woody Hayes' Buckeyes, amassing 5,589 rushing yards (second in Big Ten history) on 924 carries. He led the Big Ten in rushing in 1973 (1,577 yards), '74 (1,695 yards) and '75 (1,450 yards) and averaged a robust 6.0 yards per attempt for his career.

4. EARL CAMPBELL

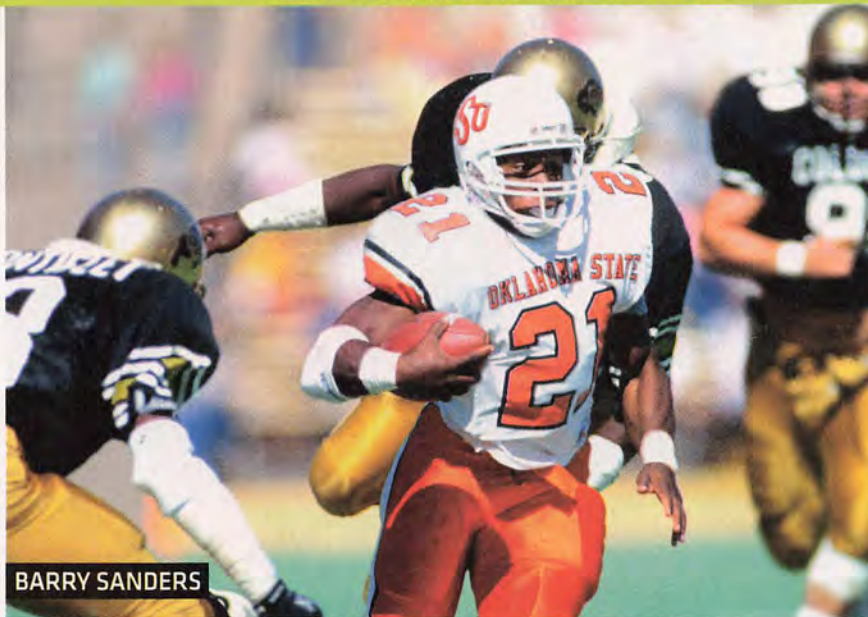
RB, Texas, 1974-77

The Tyler Rose left countless Southwest Conference defenders face-down on the turf or grasping at air. He left Austin with 4,443 rushing yards and won the 1977 Heisman Trophy with a 1,744-yard, 18-TD season for the 11-1 Longhorns. Even in the Horns' 38-10 Cotton Bowl loss to Notre Dame that cost them the national title, Campbell was a bright spot, rushing for 116 yards.

5. BO JACKSON

RB, Auburn, 1982-85

Jackson amassed quite a highlight reel in his first three seasons on The Plains, but



BARRY SANDERS

his injury-free 1985 campaign was when it all came together: 1,786 rushing yards, 17 touchdowns and a Heisman Trophy. Jackson finished his career with 4,303 rushing yards and 45 total scores before becoming a folk hero and pop culture fixture with his multi-sport pro career.

6. TIM TEBOW

QB, Florida, 2006-09

The numbers are simply staggering: 9,285 passing yards and 88 touchdowns; 2,947 rushing yards and an SEC-record 57 scores on the ground; conference records for total touchdowns (145), passing yards per attempt (9.3) and passing efficiency rating (170.8). Oh, and there's the small matter of two nation-

al championships in his four seasons in Gainesville.

7. HUGH GREEN

DE, Pittsburgh, 1977-80

Green was perhaps the greatest, most productive defensive player in college football history. A three-time consensus first-team All-American (and a second-team selection as a freshman), Green finished his career with 460 tackles, 53 sacks, 52 tackles for a loss, 24 forced fumbles and 13 fumble recoveries before embarking on a decorated pro career. He finished second in the Heisman voting in 1980 following a 17-sack senior season.



BO JACKSON

THE PANEL

Tony Barnhart – former college football writer at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*; current columnist at GridIronNow

Michael Bradley – freelance college sports writer

Matt Brown – college football writer for Sports on Earth

Jimmy Burch – college sports writer at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

Bill Connelly – college football writer for SB Nation

Rob Doster – senior editor at Athlon Sports

Chris Dufresne – former college football writer for the *Los Angeles Times*; co-founder of TMGCollegeSports.com

Bruce Feldman – college football writer at FoxSports.com

Steven Godfrey – college football writer for SB Nation

Herb Gould – former college football writer for the *Chicago Sun-Times*; co-founder of TMGCollegeSports.com

Bill King – host of The Bill King Show on 560/95.9 in Nashville

Tom Luicci – former college football writer for *The Star-Ledger* in Newark, N.J.

Ivan Maisel – college football writer for ESPN.com

Stewart Mandel – college football writer at FoxSports.com

Paul Myerberg – college football writer for *USA Today*

Bud Withers – former college football writer for the *Seattle Times*, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and *Eugene Register-Guard*



VINCE YOUNG

8. VINCE YOUNG

QB, Texas, 2003-05

Young authored arguably the greatest big-game performance in college football history — his 467-yard, three-touchdown outing in Texas' 41-38 win over USC in the Rose Bowl that gave the Horns the 2005 national title. But Young was far from a one-game wonder, passing for 6,040 yards, rushing for 3,127 and accounting for 81 touchdowns in three seasons. In Young's last two years in Austin, he led Texas to a 24-1 record, with two legendary Rose Bowl performances that yielded a combined 839 yards and eight touchdowns.

9. DEION SANDERS

CB, Florida State, 1985-88

One of the most electrifying players in football history, Sanders was a lockdown cornerback and special teams terror for some great teams in Tallahassee. Neon Deion intercepted 14 passes in his career, returning three of them for touchdowns, and he averaged 11.3 yards per punt return with three scores. He was a consensus All-American in '87 and '88 and won the Thorpe Award in '88.

10. TONY DORSETT

RB, Pittsburgh, 1973-76

Dorsett stormed out of the gate, becoming the first freshman to be named a first-team All-American in 29 years, but he saved his best for last with a monster senior season that included 2,150 rushing yards (including the Sugar Bowl win over Georgia), a national championship and a Heisman Trophy. The three-time first-team All-American finished his career with 6,082 rushing yards, a record that would stand until 1998.

11. CHARLES WOODSON

DB/PR, Michigan, 1995-97

Woodson's 1997 Heisman Trophy was somewhat controversial at the time, coming at the expense of Tennessee quarterback Peyton Manning, but a closer look reveals that Woodson was a worthy choice. That season, he led the Big Ten with seven interceptions and scored a rushing touchdown, two receiving touchdowns and a punt return touchdown. He finished his career in Ann Arbor with 16 interceptions, 537 yards from scrimmage and six touchdowns.

12. TOMMIE FRAZIER

QB, Nebraska, 1992-95

Frazier was at his best when the stakes were highest. He directed two fourth-quarter TD drives in a 24-17 victory over Miami in the 1995 Orange Bowl that gave coach Tom Osborne his first national title. Then, in the 1996 Fiesta Bowl, he rushed for 199 yards and two TDs as Nebraska overwhelmed Florida 62-24 to win another national championship and claim a place among history's greatest teams.

13. LEE ROY SELMON

DT, Oklahoma, 1972-75

The youngest of the legendary Selmon brothers, Lee Roy was a dominant force for one of the best defenses in college football history. He was a consensus All-American for an OU team that won back-to-back national titles in 1974-75, and he won the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award in '75. Barry Switzer called Selmon the best player he ever coached.

14. REGGIE BUSH

RB, USC, 2003-05

With Bush at tailback, the Trojans lost only two games in three years — both by three points — and won two national championships. Bush possessed an utterly unique mix of skills and redefined the tailback position at Tailback U. During his Heisman year of 2005, Bush averaged 8.7 yards per carry, netting 1,740 yards. He finished his career with 25 rushing TDs, 13 receiving TDs and four more scores on returns.



DEION SANDERS

THE ALL-ATHLON TEAM

THE ATHLON ERA DREAM TEAM CONSISTS OF 22 OF HISTORY'S GREATEST COLLEGIATE PLAYERS, EACH OF WHOM HAS A SPOT IN OUR TOP 50.

QB: Tim Tebow

RB: Herschel Walker, Barry Sanders

WR: Randy Moss, Larry Fitzgerald

TE: Keith Jackson

OL: John Hannah Jonathan Ogden, Orlando Pace, Anthony Munoz

C: Dave Rimington

DE: Hugh Green, Randy White

DT: Lee Roy Selmon, Ndamukong Suh

LB: Derrick Thomas, Lawrence Taylor, Brian Bosworth

CB: Charles Woodson, Deion Sanders

S: Ronnie Lott, Kenny Easley

TOP 50 BY SCHOOL

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| USC | 6 |
| Nebraska | 4 |
| Ohio State | 4 |
| Oklahoma | 3 |
| Pittsburgh | 3 |
| Texas | 3 |
| Alabama | 2 |
| Auburn | 2 |
| Florida | 2 |
| Michigan | 2 |
| Tennessee | 2 |
| UCLA | 2 |
| Baylor | 1 |
| Boston College | 1 |
| Florida State | 1 |
| Georgia | 1 |
| Marshall | 1 |
| Maryland | 1 |
| Miami | 1 |
| Mississippi Valley State | 1 |
| North Carolina | 1 |
| Oklahoma State | 1 |
| Ole Miss | 1 |
| Oregon | 1 |
| Stanford | 1 |
| Virginia Tech | 1 |
| Washington | 1 |

INSIDE THE BALLOTS

Highest-ranked player missing from one ballot: Archie Griffin (No. 3)

Highest-ranked player missing from two ballots: Vince Young (No. 8)

Highest ranking for a player not in final top 50: Eddie George, 6th

Highest ranking for a player on only one ballot: Andre Ware, 17th

Numbers of players who received at least one vote: 137

NO. 1 VOTES

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Herschel Walker | 9 |
| Tim Tebow | 3 |
| Barry Sanders | 2 |
| Tommie Frazier | 1 |
| Cam Newton | 1 |

PLAYERS ON EVERY

BALLOT:

| |
|-----------------|
| Herschel Walker |
| Barry Sanders |
| Earl Campbell |

PLAYERS ON ALL

BUT ONE BALLOT:

| |
|-----------------|
| Archie Griffin |
| Bo Jackson |
| Tim Tebow |
| Hugh Green |
| Deion Sanders |
| Charles Woodson |
| Tommie Frazier |



ORLANDO PACE

15. NDAMUKONG SUH

DT, Nebraska, 2005-09

One of history's most dominant interior defensive linemen, Suh authored a season for the ages in 2009 with 85 tackles, 12 sacks, 26 quarterback hurries, 20.5 tackles for a loss, 10 pass breakups, three blocked kicks and an interception. In the Huskers' 13-12 loss to Texas in the Big 12 Championship, Suh had 6.0 tackles for a loss and 4.5 sacks. He returned two interceptions for TDs as a junior.

16. ORLANDO PACE

OT, Ohio State, 1994-96

The father of the "pancake block" and one of the best offensive linemen in football history, Pace did not allow a sack during his final two seasons as a Buckeye, earning the Lombardi Award in 1995 and '96 and the Outland Trophy in 1996. In 1996, he finished fourth in Heisman Trophy balloting, the highest for an offensive lineman since OSU's John Hicks finished second 23 years earlier.

17. JOHN HANNAH

OL, Alabama, 1970-72

One of the best offensive linemen in college football history, Hannah was a two-time All-American who served as a road grader in the early days of Alabama's wishbone attack and earned a spot on Alabama's All-Century Team. Bear Bryant once called Hannah the greatest player he ever coached.

18. RONNIE LOTT

S, USC, 1978-80

Lott was an All-Pac-10 first-teamer in 1979 and '80, and was a unanimous All-American in 1980. He racked up 250

career tackles, including 22 for a loss. He also registered 14 interceptions and 37 pass breakups. As a senior, he picked off eight passes, tying for the NCAA lead, and deflected 16 other passes. Lott is undoubtedly one of the toughest, hardest-hitting players in the history of football.

19. DAVE RIMINGTON

C, Nebraska, 1979-82

Rimington earned back-to-back Outland trophies, the only player ever to do so, as well as the Lombardi Award in 1982, when he finished fifth in the Heisman Trophy voting. The two-time All-American was chosen as the Big Eight Offensive Player of the Year as a junior, making him the only interior lineman ever to be so honored. Fittingly, the award for best college football center bears his name.

20. O.J. SIMPSON

RB, USC, 1967-68

In his two seasons at USC, Simpson rushed for 3,423 yards, averaging 5.1 yards per carry and running for 36 touchdowns. He rushed for 1,880 yards and 23 scores in his Heisman year of 1968. An unmatched combination of fluid grace and determination, Simpson was a unanimous All-American both of his years in the cardinal and gold. During his brief college career, he set 19 school, Pac-8 and NCAA records.

21. DERRICK THOMAS

LB, Alabama, 1985-88

In 1988, the unblockable Thomas compiled a staggering 27 sacks. His career total was an equally imposing 52. As a senior, Thomas became the first SEC player to win the Butkus Award as the nation's top linebacker. Tragically, Thomas, one of the greatest linebackers in history, died in 2000 from complications brought on by an automobile accident.

22. RANDY MOSS

WR, Marshall, 1996-97

It took the mercurial Moss a while to land at Marshall thanks to disciplinary issues, but he was worth the wait for the Herd, posting two of the greatest receiving seasons in college football history. He scored at least one TD in all 28 of his college games, finishing with 174 catches for 3,529 yards and 54 scores. He was fourth in the Heisman balloting in 1997.

23. LARRY FITZGERALD

WR, Pittsburgh, 2002-03

Fitzgerald wasn't quite as physically gifted as Moss, but he was almost as productive in two seasons for the Panthers. In 26 games, Fitz caught 161 passes for 2,677 yards and a school-record 34 touchdowns. He caught at least one TD pass in an NCAA-Division-I record 18 straight games. He was the 2003 Biletnikoff winner and runner-up in the Heisman Trophy balloting.



RANDY MOSS

24. JOHNNY RODGERS

WB, Nebraska, 1970-72

The Jet became the top pass receiver and kick returner in Big Eight history, setting 41 school records and four NCAA records for Cornhusker teams that were a combined 33-2-2 and won two national championships. Rodgers' most famous play was one of the great moments in college football history — a 72-yard punt return to begin the scoring in the 1971 "Game of the Century" at Oklahoma. He would win the Heisman Trophy the following year.

25. KENNY EASLEY

S, UCLA, 1977-80

One of the most decorated defenders in college football history, Easley became the first player to earn first-team All-Pac 10 honors four consecutive years. He was a three-time consensus first-team All-American (1978, '79, '80) and finished his career with a school-record 19 interceptions and 324 tackles. He was ninth in Heisman voting in 1980.

26. ANTHONY MUÑOZ

OL, USC, 1976-79

Muñoz was the prototypical offensive lineman who showed that big men could be agile as well as dominating. A two-time All-American, Muñoz was also talented enough to have pitched for the Trojans' national championship baseball team in 1978. Knee injuries proved to be a problem for Muñoz while at USC, but they did not keep him from having a Hall of Fame NFL career.

27. MARCUS ALLEN

RB, USC, 1979-81

Allen, USC's fourth Heisman Trophy winner, became the first college back ever to crack the 2,000-yard rushing mark for the regular season, rushing for 2,342 yards in his 1981 Heisman campaign and setting new NCAA marks with 212.9 rushing yards per game and five consecutive 200-yard games. During his days in cardinal and gold, Allen broke 14 NCAA records and tied two others.

28. LAWRENCE TAYLOR

LB, North Carolina, 1977-80

At the time, Chapel Hill was a rather remote college football outpost in the basketball-mad ACC, but LT helped establish Tar Heel football during a dominant college career. Taylor, who didn't start playing football until his junior year of high school, was a terrifying combination of size, speed and aggression. In 1980, Taylor posted 16 sacks and was an All-American and ACC Player of the Year before going on to redefine the outside linebacker position in the NFL.

29. JACK TATUM

DB, Ohio State, 1968-70

Tatum, who went on to star for the Raiders, was one of the most feared hitters in football history. A key member of Ohio State's great teams from 1968 through 1970, Tatum twice was named an All-American and was the national Defensive Player of the Year as a senior. Perhaps more meaningful to him, however, was being voted one of four captains on Ohio State's All-Century Team in 2000.

30. CAM NEWTON

QB, Auburn, 2010

Newton spent only one year on The Plains after an ill-fated stint at Florida and a year in junior college, but it was one of the greatest single seasons by a quarterback in college football history. In leading Auburn to the 2010 national title, Newton completed 185-of-280 passes (66.1 percent) for 2,854 yards and 30 touchdowns and rushed for 1,473 yards and 20 touchdowns to earn the Heisman Trophy by a landslide margin.

31. STEVE EMTMAN

DE, Washington, 1989-91

Emtman was the cornerstone of one of the great teams of the modern era, the undefeated 1991 Washington Huskies, who shared the national championship with Miami. That season, Emtman won the Outland Trophy, Lombardi Award and Pac-10 Defensive Player of the Year Award and finished fourth in the Heisman voting after posting 20.5 tackles for a loss on the season. He was the first overall pick in the 1992 NFL Draft but saw his pro career cut short by injuries.

32. BRIAN BOSWORTH

LB, Oklahoma, 1984-86

The flamboyant sideshow sometimes hid the substance: Brian Bosworth was one of the best linebackers in OU history. A two-time winner of the Butkus Award, Bosworth was a devastating defender. He led OU in tackles in each of his three seasons — tallying 133, 144 and 136 tackles. He



CAM NEWTON

helped lead the Sooners to the national championship in 1985 and was even an academic All-American in '86.

33. JOHN ELWAY

QB, Stanford, 1979-82

As was the case for much of his pro career, Elway was a virtual one-man show on some Cardinal teams that lacked overall talent. Although he never was able to lead his team to a bowl game — due in part to The Play in the 1982 Cal game — Elway threw for 9,349 career yards and 77 touchdowns and led the nation in TD passes in 1982 with 24. He finished his career with nearly every Stanford and Pac-10 passing and total offense record.

34. ED REED

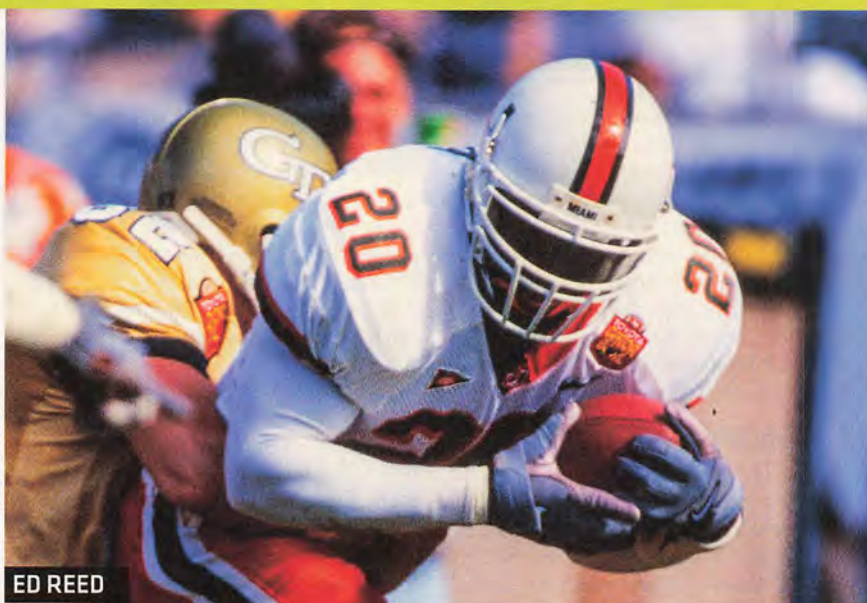
S, Miami, 1998-2001

Reed anchored the back end of some of the most talented defenses of the modern era. He holds Miami records for interceptions (21), interception return yards (389) and return touchdowns (five). He also blocked four punts, had 288 tackles, forced four fumbles and defended 52 passes during his career. He had nine interceptions for the 2001 national champions, one of history's greatest teams.

35. JERRY RICE

WR, Mississippi Valley State, 1981-84

Tiny Itta Bena, Miss., was the college home of the GOAT, who teamed up with the other half of the Satellite Express, QB Willie "Satellite" Totten, to post other-worldly numbers at MVSU. Rice set NCAA marks for receptions (102) and receiving yards (1,450) as a junior, and then topped himself as a senior with 112 catches, 1,845 receiving yards and 27 TDs. He finished his career with 301 catches for 4,693 yards and 50 touchdowns.



36. ARCHIE MANNING

QB, Ole Miss, 1968-70

Before siring two great NFL quarterbacks, Archie was an Ole Miss legend who passed for 4,753 yards, rushed for 823 more and accounted for 56 touchdowns in an era when those numbers were extraordinary. He secured his legend in a 33-32 loss to Alabama in 1969, when he passed for 436 yards and three touchdowns and rushed for 104 yards in a losing effort.

37. RICKY WILLIAMS

RB, Texas, 1995-98

Williams broke Earl Campbell's school freshman rushing record with 990 yards, and he was off and running. Williams was a two-time All-American and the first two-time winner of the Doak Walker Award (1997 and '98). In his senior year, he rushed for a school single-season record 2,124 yards and earned the Heisman Tro-

phy along with the Maxwell Award and AP Player of the Year and Walter Camp Player of the Year honors.

38. MATT LEINART

QB, USC, 2003-05

Leinart won the Heisman as a junior, when he completed 65 percent of his passes for 3,322 yards and 33 touchdowns with only six interceptions. Over his three-year career as a starter, he completed 65 percent of his tosses for 10,693 yards and a school-record 99 touchdowns, and was a two-time first-team All-American. With Leinart calling signals, the Trojans went 37-2 with a 34-game winning streak, three Pac-10 titles and two national titles.

39. MIKE SINGLETARY

LB, Baylor, 1977-80

A player of matchless intensity, Singletary was a tackle machine for the Bears, who attained an unprecedented level of success during his time in Waco. He had 97 tackles as a freshman, a school-record 232 as a sophomore (including 35 in a game against Houston), 188 as a junior and 145 as a senior, when the Bears won 10 games and a Cotton Bowl berth. He was an All-American as a junior and senior.

40. RANDY WHITE

DL, Maryland, 1971-74

The Manster — part man, part monster — terrorized ACC offenses before embarking on a Hall of Fame pro career. Starting his career as a fullback, White moved to defense as a sophomore and became one of the best linemen in the country thanks to speed that matched that of some running backs. As a senior, White won the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award and was the ACC Player of the Year.



41. BRUCE SMITH

DE, Virginia Tech, 1981-84

Smith was an unblockable sack machine for the Hokies, amassing 46 career sacks, including a nation-leading 22 as a junior. He was a first-team All-American in 1983 and '84 and won the 1984 Outland Trophy. He also had 71 tackles behind the line of scrimmage for 504 yards in losses. The No. 1 overall pick of the 1985 NFL Draft, Smith had a Hall of Fame career for the Bills and Redskins and is the NFL's all-time sack leader with 200.

42. JONATHAN OGDEN

OT, UCLA, 1992-95

Ogden was a perfect combination of size (6'9", 345) and athleticism for the all-important left tackle position, which he played in textbook fashion at both the college and pro levels. In 23 games as a junior and senior, Ogden allowed only two sacks. In 1995, he earned unanimous first-team All-America honors along with the Outland Trophy and UPI Lineman of the Year award. He was also an NCAA champion in the shot put.

43. REGGIE WHITE

DT, Tennessee, 1980-83

The Minister of Defense is better known for his Hall of Fame pro career, but he also had a dominant college career spent terrorizing SEC quarterbacks and running backs. White holds the school record for sacks in a single season with 15 in 1983 and only recently saw his school career sack record broken by Derek Barnett. White was the SEC Player of the Year and an All-American in '83.

44. CHRIS SPIELMAN

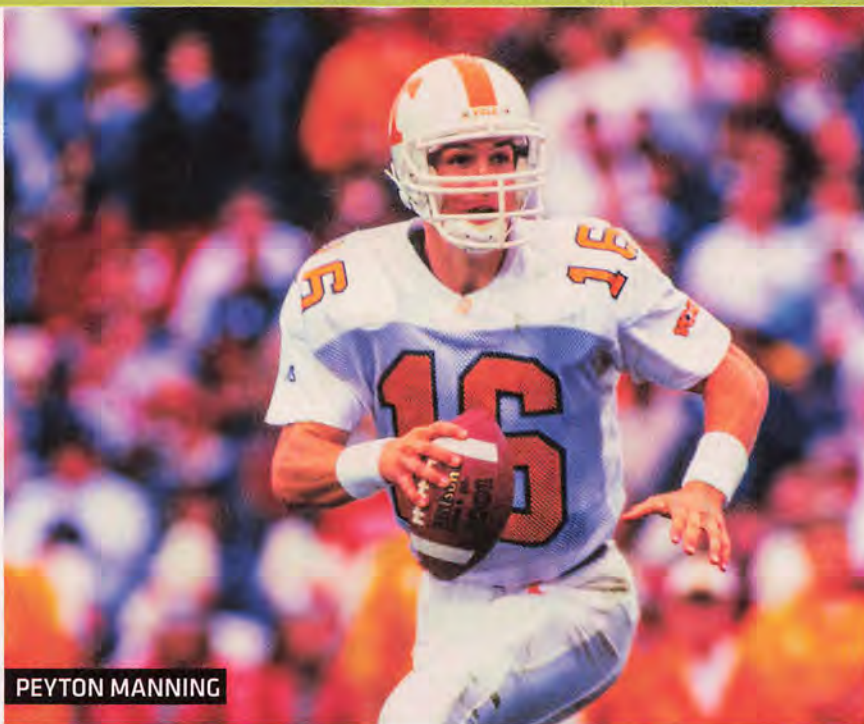
LB, Ohio State, 1984-87

Maniacally intense, Spielman finished his career as Ohio State's all-time leader with 283 solo tackles overall and 105 solo stops in a season (1986), and also tied a school record with 29 tackles in the 1986 Michigan game. A three-time All-Big Ten choice and two-time All-American, the Massillon native was a cult hero in Ohio and appeared on a Wheaties box as a high schooler.

45. PEYTON MANNING

QB, Tennessee, 1994-97

Manning finished his career having rewritten the school passing record book and extensively edited the SEC record book. He left Knoxville in possession of conference marks for career wins as a starter, completions, completion percentage, passing yards and total offense, among others. He won the 1997 Davey O'Brien and Johnny Unitas Golden Arm awards, and was the SEC Player of the Year and a unanimous All-American.



PEYTON MANNING

46. KEITH JACKSON

TE, Oklahoma, 1984-87

Despite playing in a run-first (and run-second) offense, Jackson found a niche as a big-play threat. In 1986, OU attempted 7.3 passes per game, and in 1987, 8.3 passes per game — and Jackson was an All-American both years. In OU's win over Penn State in the 1986 Orange Bowl — which gave the Sooners the national championship — Jackson caught a 71-yard touchdown pass.

47. MARCUS MARIOTA

QB, Oregon, 2012-14

Mariota was a remarkably prolific quarterback in his three seasons in the high-powered Quack Attack. Among his countless statistical milestones: 10,796 career yards passing and 105 TDs to go with 2,237 yards rushing and 29 more TDs in only three seasons, with a win-loss record of 36-5. In his Heisman campaign of 2014, Mariota posted this phenomenal stat line: 4,454 yards passing, 68.3 percent completion percentage, 42 TD passes with only four interceptions, 770 rushing yards and 15 rushing scores.

48. DANNY WUERFFEL

QB, Florida, 1993-96

Wuerffel and Florida coach Steve Spurrier were a match made in Fun 'n' Gun heaven. Wuerffel ran Spurrier's offense to perfection in leading the Gators to their first-ever national title and winning the school its first Heisman since Spurrier's in 1967. Wuerffel finished his college career having completed 708 of 1,170 passes for

10,875 yards with 114 touchdown passes. His career pass efficiency rating of 163.56 was the best in major college history at the time, and his percentage of passes that went for TDs (9.74) also ranked first.

49. DOUG FLUTIE

QB, Boston College, 1981-84

The diminutive Flutie became an American folk hero during his 1984 Heisman Trophy season, a campaign that saw Flutie throw for 3,454 yards and 27 touchdowns — the most notable being the famous "Hail Flutie" pass that beat Miami 47-45. Flutie left BC as college football's all-time passing yardage leader with 10,579 (since broken). The subsequent surge in applications to BC after his Heisman season signaled a phenomenon that became known as the "Flutie effect," showing the power of college sports in building a school's reputation.

50. DESMOND HOWARD

WR/KR, Michigan, 1989-91

Howard was the most electrifying player in college football in his day. He was the first receiver ever to lead the Big Ten in scoring, amassing a nation-leading 23 total touchdowns during his Heisman-winning season, and he set a handful of NCAA records in the process. In 1991, he received more first-place Heisman votes than anyone else before him, and he also captured the Walter Camp and Maxwell awards.

Note: The NCAA did not count bowl games toward official statistics until the 2002 season. Unless otherwise indicated, all statistics listed are the official NCAA numbers.

THE 50 MOST SIGNIFICANT COLLEGE FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE LAST 50 YEARS

The Athlon Sports era began with the publication of our first SEC preview magazine in 1967, and the intervening half-century has brought so many seismic shifts to the college football landscape that we wonder if our founder, Jerry McCoin, would even recognize the sport that inspired him to launch a company. In honor of our golden anniversary, here are the 50 most impactful changes, innovations and outright breakthroughs to hit college football in the last 50 years.

Ranking by Athlon Sports //// Text by Michael Bradley



It was every sports fan's dream: A 24-hour channel devoted entirely to sports. Three-minute local TV reports and newspaper accounts would no longer dominate the distribution of athletic news. ESPN would change all of that. On Sept. 7, 1979, Bill Rasmussen bought some satellite time, set up headquarters in Bristol, Conn., and aired the first-ever SportsCenter.

College sports would never be the same.

The first big step the network took was to acquire rights to the NCAA basketball tournament's early-round games in 1980. Four years later, thanks to the Supreme Court's decision that broke up the NCAA's monopoly on deciding who could broadcast college football games and how many were allowed to air, ESPN made a big move into the sport.

Since that time, ESPN has become the undisputed heavyweight college football champ. Its inventory of college games across all conferences — and multiple channels — together with its pre- and post-game programming, recruiting coverage and spring football attention dwarfed what other networks were able to air. ESPN's alignment with ABC Sports under the Disney umbrella gave it even more authority, as well as a national outlet for programming.

The network's financial resources, multiple platforms and mighty promotional ability made ESPN synonymous with college football. Its ability to lock up long-term deals with major conferences will allow it to hold on to that distinction for years to come.

2. Scholarship Limits

In the old days, big college programs would bring in as many freshmen as they could, stage a two-week training camp and keep the ones they wanted. There were no limits, no rules and no excuses.

In 1972, Title IX changed that. The federal regulation, which mandated that schools receiving federal money — in other words, practically all of them — had to offer equal opportunities to male and female students, forced the NCAA to impose a 105-person limit on rosters. In 1978, that number dropped to 95, and 14 years later it fell to 85, today's limit. Because schools now had caps on the number of freshmen they could import, more programs had more access to more players. Teams that had previously been unable to dream of competing with the best in their conferences now had the opportunity to gain ground. Further, women's athletic programs, which had been afterthoughts before Title IX, became far more robust as colleges devoted more resources to them in an attempt to comply with the federal mandate.

3. INTEGRATION OF THE SEC

Kentucky football wasn't any good in the late 1960s, so it's something of a footnote that defensive end Nat Worthington broke the color barrier for SEC football, seeing time for UK in its 1967 opener against Indiana. One week later, Worthington's three minutes on the field — he re-injured the shoulder he had dislocated the week prior — against Ole Miss marked the first integrated SEC game.

Tennessee, Auburn, Florida, Mississippi State and Vanderbilt all had African-Americans on their rosters before **John Mitchell** made an appearance for Alabama in a 1971 game at USC. But since Bama was a bigger name, Bear Bryant gets the credit for being the league's integration pioneer. Once Alabama added black players to its roster, the rest of the SEC followed, and the conference's course was changed forever. Instead of having the best African-American athletes leaving southern states to play at big-time schools up north or at historically black colleges, they went to the SEC. From 1936-70, four different SEC schools won five national titles. From 1971 on, six SEC members have captured 15 national crowns.



4. FRESHMAN ELIGIBILITY

When Jack Mildren came to Oklahoma in 1968, he wasn't allowed to play for the Sooners, even though the Texas high school star's recruitment had been big enough to be the subject of a *Sports Illustrated* article. No freshmen were eligible back then, so Mildren and his fellow newcomers played Monday nights for the Boomers, OU's team of first-year players.

In 1972, the NCAA made freshman football players eligible. That year, running back **Joe Washington** was among the impact newcomers able to play. The reason for the switch was simple: It was getting too expensive to maintain teams like the Boomers. Those who asserted that freshmen needed a year to acclimate were overruled by those looking to trim the budget — and get the Jack Mildrens and Joe Washingtons of the world on the field faster.



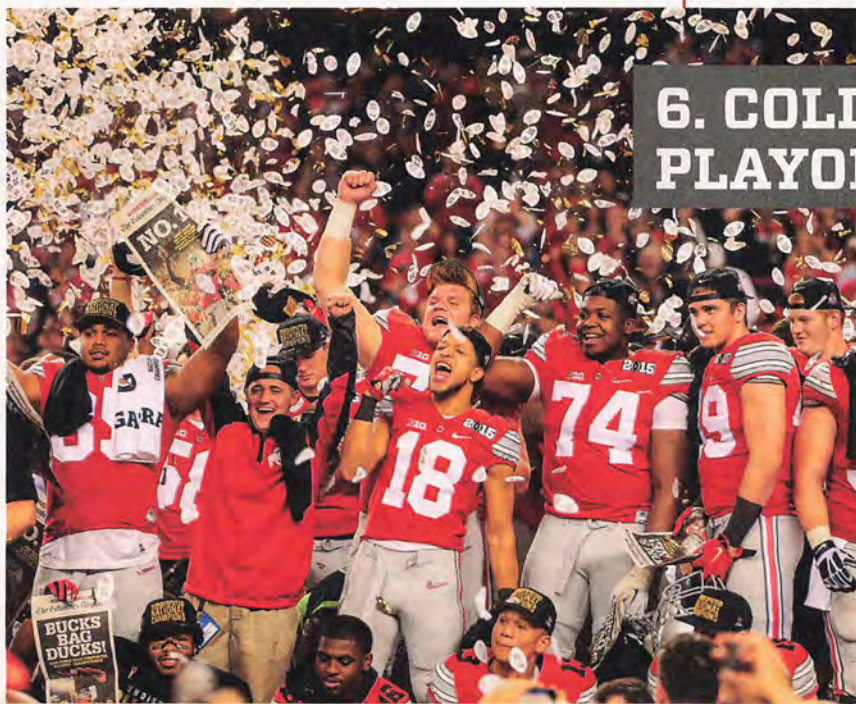
5. End of Monopoly

For just about as long as television brought college football into America's living rooms, fans were beholden to the NCAA's decisions regarding which networks could carry which games. From 1965-81, ABC was the sole outlet for Saturday's heroes, and any school or conference with the temerity to negotiate its own deal was considered a member in "bad standing." So, the schools obeyed, and fans were left to watch a game or two every weekend.

That changed in 1984, when thanks to a suit brought by Oklahoma and Georgia, the Supreme Court ruled that the NCAA practice violated the Sherman Antitrust Act that prohibited monopolies. The decision freed schools from the NCAA negotiating yoke and led to the establishment of the College Football Association and deals with other networks to broadcast games. Soon, a small menu would become a smorgasbord of TV options for fans.

7. Overtime

When the SEC announced in 1992 that its conference title game — the first ever in FBS history — would go to overtime if the teams were tied in regulation, many fans braced for what they thought would be a first. In reality, OT had been part of the college landscape for 16 years, dating back to the D-III playoff game between Buena Vista and Carroll. Divisions I-AA, II and III ended tie games in 1981, but it wasn't until the '95 bowl season that the big boys joined the fun. That was an experiment. In 1996, it became the law of the land. Many have expressed dissatisfaction with the format, which gives each team a chance to score from the 25-yard line. But the system manufactured considerable excitement and strategic questions, which were enhanced when the NCAA instituted a rule in 1997 that forced teams to go for two points after TDs in the third overtime.



6. COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

For decades, fans had been dreaming about an actual college football playoff that would end the debates and establish a definitive national champion. After years of bowl selection shenanigans and the nightmare that was the BCS, the dream became a reality in 2014 with the establishment of a four-team "tournament" with participants chosen by a 13-person selection committee.

Of course, it wasn't perfect. Many people wanted at least eight teams. That way, all of the Power 5 conference champions could be included, along with a few at-large schools. But once the final game was completed, there was no arguing, no poll splits and no complaining. College football had a singular winner. At last.

8. Recruiting Websites

The information used to come in slowly, like dispatches from far-off lands. Fans had to wait until Signing Day to be sure who they had.

Around the turn of the century, websites sprang up to cover the recruiting world and give fans information on what prospects their favorite schools were pursuing and what chance they had of landing them. Recruiting sites tell fans and coaches what top prep players are thinking. How was that campus visit last weekend, Bubba? "I loved the ice cream in the cafeteria." What schools are in your top five, Ace? "Alabama has just replaced Tennessee." Since coaches can't comment on players they are recruiting, and local newspapers don't have the resources to chase down every local player and provide weekly updates on his preferences, these sites have filled the need.

9. Spread Offenses

It's hard to pinpoint the specific inventor of the spread-em-out attacks that enjoy so much favor today. Some credit Rusty Russell, who in 1927 as the head coach of the Masonic Home and School for Orphaned Boys in Fort Worth, Texas, deployed an attack that spread his undersized charges across the field. TCU coach Dutch Meyer wrote a book about the spread — his version was a double-wing set-up — that influenced future coaches like Don Coryell and Mouse Davis. But when it comes to the modern, one-back "basketball on grass" scheme, credit belongs to California high school legend Jack Neumeier, who pioneered the attack in the early '70s.

Today, teams across the nation hope to out-flank defenses by making them defend the entire field. Offenses try to create mismatches, employ tempo to create confusion and fatigue and value skill players over everything. The results have been more passes, more points and fatter stat lines than ever before, while allowing less talented teams to compete.



10. SEC EXPANSION

Find somebody who remembers the old Southwest Conference wistfully and ask how he feels about Arkansas. Prepare for a fusillade.

Had the Hogs not decided to bolt the SWC back in the summer of 1990, the venerable league might have stuck together, at least for a little longer than it did. Once the only non-Texas school left, the Southwest Conference was doomed — and the SEC was on its way to undisputed top dog status. The SEC decided to expand in May 1990, just about the time Penn State was surrendering its independent status to join the Big Ten. Instead of adding one school, the SEC wanted to bring aboard two, so that its expanded footprint would be more attractive to advertisers and TV executives, and it would be able to stage a lucrative conference title game, per a little-known NCAA regulation.

Finding a partner for **Arkansas** wasn't easy. Neither Texas nor Texas A&M was interested. Florida State — also an Independent at the time — chose the ACC, in part due to its animosity toward SEC member Florida. Miami went the Big East route to help its basketball program. That left **South Carolina**, which was so eager to become a member that it voted preemptively to accept an invitation, which came in late September. For the 1992 season, the SEC consisted of 12 teams, changing the college football landscape forever.



11. BIGGER TEN

Penn State coach Joe Paterno tried to create a conference comprised of Independent schools in the East, but the Big East's rise as an elite college basketball league ended that dream, and the Nittany Lions remained Independent on the gridiron until the late 1980s. That's when the school began negotiations with the Big Ten. In late '89, the two sides agreed that PSU would join, a move that was made official in early 1990. Penn State began playing Big Ten football in 1993, and the move triggered 20-plus years of a spinning national realignment carousel that didn't stop until 2014, when Rutgers and Maryland officially started play in the Big Ten.

12. Targeting

As the 21st Century dawned, the game faced a crisis, thanks to mounting evidence that linked head trauma with significant future issues, such as dementia, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and Alzheimer's disease. After significant debate — and some denial — protocols were established to protect those who had suffered concussions, both in the form of treatment guidelines and on-field regulations.

The biggest came in 2013, when the targeting rule was instituted. Its goal was to eliminate the type of hits that caused head injury, whether the excessive contact was intentional or not. In addition to a 15-yard penalty, the targeting foul included an ejection. If the player were kicked out in the second half, he would have to sit out the first half of the next game. There was criticism, but player safety became more important as a result.

13. Instant Replay

If you dislike instant replay, you can thank the controversy at the end of the 2001 Michigan-Michigan State game for the whole mess. Had there not been outrage over what Wolverine fans thought were clock shenanigans that allowed the Spartans one final play, the Big Ten wouldn't have begun investigating the concept of replay, which the NFL had begun in 1986.

The conference began using it on an experimental basis in 2004. The next year, all but two FBS conferences employed it.

14. Film Study

The image of a coach sitting in a darkened room running grainy, black-and-white game film back and forth is as much a part of college football lore as marching bands and mascots. And over the past 20 years, technology has provided ever-increasing convenience and versatility to the video aspect of preparation. Coaches can have a full game video downloaded onto their computers before they leave the stadium. Thanks to software programs, they can access any possible combination of plays and situations. Teams can provide players with position-specific packages that they can watch on computers and tablets. Americans may spend too much time in front of screens, but for college football, more is definitely better.

15. THE BCS



There have been worse ideas throughout the history of college football than the BCS — but there haven't been many.

What began in 1992 as the Bowl Coalition morphed into the Bowl Alliance before beginning life in 1998 as the much-reviled Bowl Championship Series. A combination of polls and computer rankings was used to pit the top two teams in the country against each other. That goal was accomplished several times, but there were seasons when disaster reigned.

In 2001, Colorado hammered Nebraska, 62-36, in the regular-season finale, but the Cornhuskers went to the BCS title game ahead of the Buffaloes — and were ripped by Miami. Two years later, Oklahoma earned a BCS berth, even though it had been blown out by Kansas State in the Big 12 title game.

The BCS died in 2014, when the College Football Playoff was created, thereby ending an inherently flawed system and a national punchline.

16. HURRY-UP OFFENSE



When Fielding "Hurry Up" Yost's 1902 Michigan team would end a play, quarterback Boss Weeks would call out signals for the next play while still under the pile. The Wolverines outscored opponents 644-12 and won their second straight national title. What John Heisman had started at Auburn in the 1890s — offense at a frenetic pace — had evolved.

In the early 1990s, **Hal Mumme** introduced a fast-paced, no-huddle attack at Iowa Wesleyan, helped by assistant Mike Leach. Mumme took his attack to Kentucky, and his ideas and disciples spread out all over America. Today, teams attack at breakneck paces, trying to tire out defenses and create mismatches that lead to quick scores and as many plays as possible.

Oklahoma, Alabama: AP; UK: Athlon Archives

17. Big Ten Network

ESPN's inability in 2004 to reach an agreement over rights fees with the Big Ten led the conference to seek its own outlet for programming. The league turned to Fox to create a network to broadcast some of its games and promote its members.

In late August 2007 — a year after the Mountain West created the mtn. — the Big Ten Network was launched as a joint venture between the conference, which owned 49 percent of the channel, and Fox. Thanks to favorable distribution agreements, BTN gained a strong footing almost immediately, and other leagues developed an immediate case of network envy.

18. The Wishbone

When Texas went 0-1-1 in its first two games running Emory Bellard's newfangled offense, many felt the gimmick would die a quick and quiet death. Thirty Longhorn wins later, the Wishbone was rolling along. Before long, many of America's top teams — including Oklahoma and Alabama — were unleashing squadrons of backs on overmatched rivals and rolling up the yards, points and wins. Texas won the 1969 national championship and went undefeated the following regular season. Oklahoma won three national titles (1974, '75, '85) using the offense, and Alabama won back-to-back titles (1978-79) unleashing a passel of backs out of the formation.

19. Facility Arms Race

Back in 1980, Michigan coach Bo Schembechler was tired of having to take his teams to California — and any other bowl destination — early, just so his team could get away from nasty winter weather. So, U-M constructed the first indoor practice facility.

More than 35 years later, that simple, carpeted shed has spawned a facilities arms race that has touched every FBS team, not to mention plenty of FCS schools, too. Each year, a new gold standard opens, with player comforts that seem decadent. The new, \$55 million Clemson building has a nap room, a barbershop, a bowling alley, putt-putt, an arcade and a fun slide. It isn't quite as opulent as Oregon's \$68 million, 145,000-square-foot showpiece, but it should give the Tigers quite a recruiting advantage — at least until the next school builds a facility that includes a skydiving simulator.

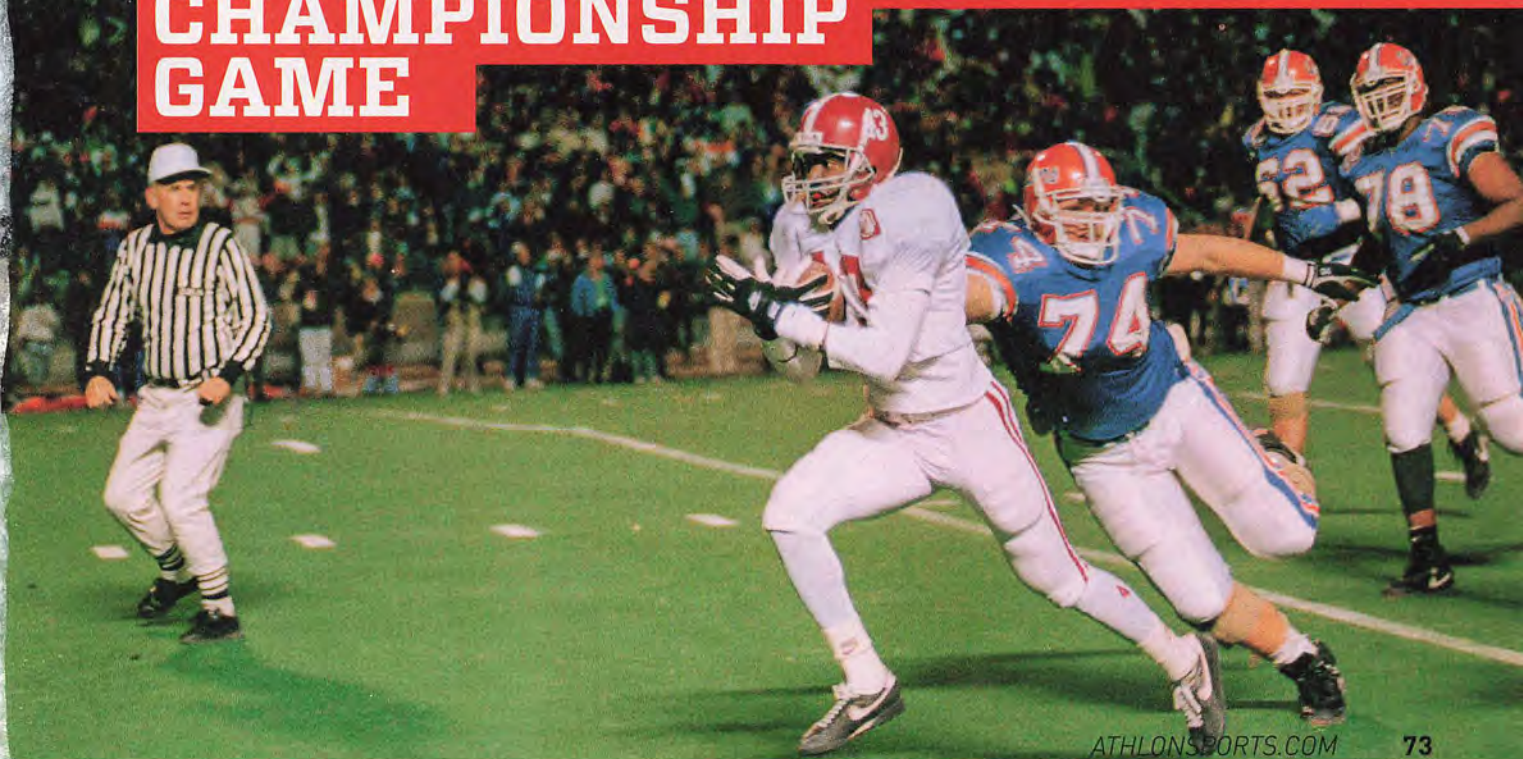
20. Three and Out

Until 1990, players had to spend four years on campus or be that long removed from high school graduation before they could apply for a spot in the NFL Draft. In '90, that changed. All of a sudden, juniors, or redshirt sophomores, were allowed to join the fun. Players liked it, because it brought them a year closer to getting paid — provided they were selected — although some still wished they could go even earlier. Coaches weren't thrilled by it, because top talent was leaving a year early. And fans were devastated when the best of the best moved on a year (or two) early. Lawsuits have been filed to allow players even earlier access to the NFL, but none has succeeded. Other models have been floated, but none has gained enough support to pass. The compromise doesn't have anybody entirely happy, but it still seems to have worked out pretty well.

It made perfect sense. Once the SEC divided itself into two divisions following the 1992 additions of Arkansas and South Carolina, its leadership wanted to choose its champion with a stand-alone title game that would generate big interest — and bigger profits. In 1992, the league staged the first-ever conference championship game, with **West winner Alabama beating East champ Florida**, 28-21, at Legion Field in Birmingham. Florida gained revenge the next year, again at Legion Field. Since then, the game has been staged at the Georgia Dome and will move next door to Mercedes-Benz Stadium in 2017.

The SEC's game helped fuel other conference expansion and eventual championship contests for the ACC (2005), Big Ten and Pac-12 (both 2011) and Big 12 (2017) as well as a collection of non-Power 5 conferences. They take place the first Saturday in December, allow teams to make their final arguments to the CFP Selection Committee and provide millions of dollars in revenue.

21. SEC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME



22. Let Them Text!

During its existence, the NCAA has proven itself to be out of touch on a wide variety of topics, but its nine-year ban (2007-16) on college coaches' ability to text recruits was one of its most shortsighted moves.

The text message is the preferred means of contact for teenagers, and eliminating the ability for coaches to connect with prospects through the players' most natural communication method didn't make a lot of sense. So, in April 2016, the NCAA made legal what it had been allowing other sports to do for several years: permit football coaches to text recruits. Some coaches were thrilled with the ability to increase contact. Others weren't so happy. And the players?

At least they don't have to talk to anyone.

23. Hudl Up

The days of Billy Bob and Bubba having to send samples of their on-field work through the mail to college coaches hit life support back in 2006, when three Nebraska grads created Hudl. Now used by thousands of teams in 18 sports, it is best known as a video highlight aggregator that allows recruiters to view footage of prospects without heading to their mailboxes.

Instead of waiting for CDs to arrive or having to drive all over to see every potential recruit, coaches log onto a player's Hudl account, watch some highlights and decide if he can help old State U win some games. Hudl also helps coaches in game preparation and player development, but college coaches love it because it brings the action directly to them, with no postage due.



24. BIGGER, FASTER, STRONGER

In the mid-1990s, college football was obsessed with speed, so much so that teams were taking safeties and making them linebackers and turning linebackers into ends, creating speedy units to out-manuever even the most sophisticated attack.

Speed remains a coveted trait in all players, but coaches now want players who are both big and fast. And strong. The increased sophistication of training and nutritional approaches, not to mention the idea that sleep is actually a good thing, has allowed players to incorporate all three characteristics on both sides of the ball. Linemen like **Jadeveon Clowney** have tremendous power and quickness. Backs are faster and more armored than ever. Linebackers look like marble statues and can run 4.4 40s, and the outside guys might just take flight soon.

25. 11th ... and 12th Games

When it came to the battle over whether it was a good idea to expand the number of games that a college football team could play, there was always one clear winner.

The bottom line.

In 1970, after nearly two decades of playing 10 times a year — not counting bowls — teams were in action on 11 autumn Saturdays. Thirty-six years later, that figure grew again.

Add in a potential conference title game and two possible playoff contests, and the collegians could suit up 15 times, or 50 percent more than their counterparts did in 1969.

26. Proposition 48

Proposition 48 was enacted in 1986 with the goal of creating minimum academic standards for incoming freshmen. Students had to have at least a 2.0 GPA in 11 core courses and a 700 on their SATs. Those who didn't hit both standards were ineligible to practice or play their freshman years on campus and could not receive scholarship money. Future amendments to Prop 48 upped the number of core classes and introduced a sliding scale that allowed students to have lower test scores if their GPAs were higher. The "partial qualifier" designation was introduced that allowed for students who reached either the GPA or SAT standard to receive a scholarship and practice but not compete. In 2016, the NCAA revamped the core requirements again and allowed those who didn't meet them to practice and receive aid but not compete.

27. Hashmarks Narrow

In 1993, college football proved it was just as addicted to high-octane offense as the NFL was. After more than four decades of having the field neatly divided into thirds by a set of hashmarks, the NCAA decided to push the lines in by just under seven feet per side, giving runners heading wide more room to turn, receivers a bigger area in which to operate and kickers a more direct shot at the uprights. As a result, spread formations proliferated, more points were scored, and defensive coordinators became endangered species.

When Oregon played in the 1995 Rose Bowl, the craziest thing about the team's uniforms was the presence of Donald Duck — courtesy of Disney — on the sleeve. Four years later, the Ducks and Nike founder Phil Knight began a trend that has turned college football into a game of fashion can-you-top-this. Oregon started to come up with uniforms that would appeal more to teenagers than alumni. Crazy socks, chrome helmets, "feather" designs on jerseys and all sorts of color schemes were introduced, sparking a movement throughout college football that made some schools unrecognizable.



28. DRESS FOR SUCCESS

29. THE GREENING OF NORTHWESTERN

In 1981, Northwestern was probably the worst job in all of football. But **Dennis Green** wanted the gig, becoming just the second African-American head coach in Division I-A history. (The first, Willie Jeffries, had coached at Wichita State, which stopped fielding a team after the 1986 season.)

Green's ascension at a Big Ten school broke ground and led other schools in the '80s to follow suit — although it was far from an avalanche.



30. Get On Down(field)

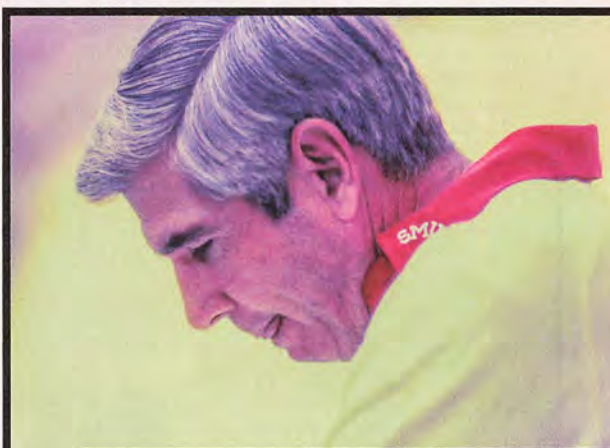
Until 1977, offensive linemen who left the trenches before a pass was released were penalized and ridiculed for thinking they belonged downfield.

But '77 brought change that led to a growth in the passing game. First, linemen were allowed a "half extension" of their arms in pass protection. Even more important was that linemen were allowed to be three yards downfield on screen passes, before the ball was thrown. The rule change injected some life into the aerial strategies of teams, and by the 1980s, more advancements helped build affection for the forward pass.

As long as the NCAA has been investigating shenanigans when it comes to recruiting and maintaining eligibility of players, it has handed down probationary sentences. But in February 1987, the organization's Infractions Committee did something unprecedented. It canceled SMU's entire '87 football season. **Coach Bobby Collins'** Mustangs had already been banned from postseason play in 1985 and prohibited from playing televised games in '86. But the severity of SMU's violations warranted more than bowl bans and TV exclusion. Thus, the Death Penalty.

31. UNTIL DEATH...

For more than 10 years, the Mustangs had been using a slush fund to pay recruits and reward players for good performance. And it worked. From 1980-84, SMU won 49 games and three Southwest Conference titles. But once the NCAA hammer came down, the party was over. The Mustangs didn't play in 1987 or '88, and the program was never the same.



32. Testing, Testing

It didn't exactly take an act of Congress to get the NCAA to begin testing its athletes for drugs, but a Congressional investigation sure helped. Facing questions from legislators about the role of drugs in college sports, the NCAA in 1986 announced that it would start testing participants in college bowl games and Division I-AA, II and III tournament contests.

The NCAA said it would examine samples for 90 different substances, including recreational drugs, steroids, stimulants and diuretics. In 2006, the NCAA introduced year-round testing. By then, most schools had their own programs. The message was clear: The party was over — if you got caught.

33. Fiesta Bowl: No. 1 vs. No. 2

Now that college football chooses a national champion by a tournament, rather than an election, it's hard to remember what it was like in the Old Days, when men in funny-colored jackets tried to make deals with schools to play in their bowl games.

When the 1986 regular season ended, Miami and Penn State were Nos. 1 and 2 in the polls. More important, each was an Independent and therefore not tied to any one particular postseason game due to conference affiliation. The Citrus Bowl tried to money-whip the teams into playing each other in Orlando, but the Fiesta Bowl convinced the Hurricanes and Nittany Lions to get it on in Tempe. Then, NBC stepped in and moved the game — which suddenly had more cachet than the more established Rose, Orange, Sugar and Cotton Bowls — to Jan. 2, to create a stand-alone national championship event. The move worked. More people watched the Fiesta Bowl, a 14–10 Penn State win, than any other bowl to that point.

36. COLLEGE GAMEDAY



34. TWITTER

Twitter presents the opportunity for instant news and analysis, the sharing of opinions and the opportunity for an explosion of controversy.



35. Air Raid

From 1976-94, a BYU quarterback led the nation in passing yards nine times, and in 1984, the Cougars won a national championship. LaVell Edwards wasn't running a pure Air Raid attack, but the skies above Provo were often filled with footballs.

Even Edwards might be surprised at the explosion of passing in the college ranks these days. Thanks to folks like Hal Mumme, Mike Leach and Mark Mangino, the four-wide, one-back, throw-it-almost-every-down attack has been in vogue for a couple decades. Quarterbacks call the plays at the line, identify mismatches before the snap and toss it all around to amass crazy amounts of yards and points.

Not even the most optimistic ESPN employee could have imagined in 1993 that bringing a pregame show on the road would result in a weekly autumn phenomenon. But once ESPN's College GameDay became a movable feast, its popularity began to mushroom.

The idea began in the Bristol studios in 1987. Six years later, ESPN started the live broadcasts, with the first taking place in South Bend before the '93 matchup between No. 1 Florida State and No. 2 Notre Dame. Since then, it has been a Saturday fixture at the biggest games, mixing entertainment with analysis and plenty of promotion.

37. NOTRE DAME BROADCASTING COMPANY

In 1991, it was no secret that the biggest ratings draw in college football resided in South Bend, Ind. Notre Dame had the only true national program in the country.

As TV dollars poured into established conferences, the Fighting Irish stood alone. That changed in August 1991, when NBC agreed to televise all of Notre Dame's home games, a relationship that continues today. There are those who criticize the network's homerism when it comes to airing the team — with good reason. But the deal allowed ND to maintain football independence, something that has always been very important to the school.



38. Artificial Turf

Indiana State's Memorial Stadium holds but 12,764 people and sits atop a dirt mound in Terre Haute. But in 1967, it became the first college football venue to convert its playing surface to ChemGrass, or AstroTurf. The carpet soon became ubiquitous, and artificial turf continues to be a cost-effective choice for many programs.

39. Bowl Tie-Ins

Today, each FBS conference publicizes its various bowl tie-ins that link its members to specific games and opponents from pre-selected leagues. That's how we know that representatives from the AAC and C-USA will get together in December for the Boca Raton Bowl.

The genesis for these agreements is the post-WWII pact between the Big Ten (then the Big 9) and Pac-12 (Pacific Coast Conference) that linked the leagues' champions to the Rose Bowl. Not long after, the Sugar (SEC), Cotton (SWC) and Orange (Big Eight) established relationships with conferences. Today, just about every bowl has some form of agreement, although the biggest games are tied partly to the College Football Playoff and therefore must exercise greater flexibility than does their Belk Bowl cousin.



40. THURSDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

If some is good, then more is better, right? When it comes to college football, ESPN couldn't agree more. So, in 1997, it started airing games on Thursday nights, giving fans an early start to the weekend and steering clear of Friday night high school action. Mike Tirico handled play-by-play the first nine seasons and was teamed most notably with Lee Corso and Kirk Herbstreit. Games often involved teams from the ACC, SEC and Big East, but many other programs participated, the better to create an on-campus event and increase national awareness. The Nov. 2, 2006, game between Louisville and West Virginia remains ESPN's highest-rated Thursday night game.



41. YELLOW FIRST DOWN LINE

There have been greater inventions throughout the history of mankind, like the printing press, the telephone and nachos, but when it comes to watching football on TV, it's tough to beat the yellow first-down line invented by Sportvision. It debuted in 1998 during a Sunday night NFL game between the Ravens and Bengals and was an immediate hit. Within a couple years, it was a standard feature on each NFL broadcast and practically every college game. Watching football on TV without it is quite maddening. And its presence has fans asking one big question: When will it be visible on the field for those actually at the game?

42. Kickoff Classic

The New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority decided that, instead of the struggling Garden State Bowl, it would hold a big preseason matchup that would fill Giants Stadium. The NCAA granted an exemption so the game would not count against the 11 games teams were permitted to play, and The Kickoff Classic was born. On Aug. 29, 1983, No. 1 Nebraska met No. 4 Penn State in the inaugural Classic. Although there were other exempt preseason contests, the New Jersey version was the big one. Once the NCAA added a 12th game in 2002, the "exempt" games were finished, but neutral-site openers between top programs live on.

44. Repeat Performance

There was no school in the Big Ten happier in 1971 than the conference dropped its egalitarian — but rather silly — no-repeat rule regarding the Rose Bowl than Ohio State. Unshackled by the elimination of the mandate, the Buckeyes played in Pasadena from '73-'76 [the 1974 appearance came thanks to a 6-4 vote of Big Ten athletic directors after OSU tied Michigan, 10-10]. It was only the second time since 1947 a Big Ten team had repeated at the Granddaddy. Minnesota had back-to-back appearances in 1961 and '62, because the agreements between the Big Ten and Pac-8 were in flux. And the Pac-8 ended its no-repeat practice in 1966, paving the way for USC to compile a four-game streak of Roses (1967-'70) of its own.

45. Kicking the Tee

Talk to most football players, and they will tell you kickers have it easy. They don't get hit in practice, and they aren't subject to the same strength and conditioning mandates as their full-contact teammates. In 1989, the NCAA agreed that the kicking life was too soft and ruled that placements could not be attempted from a tee. In 1987, kickers were successful on 67.1 percent of all tries, including 80.2 percent from inside 40 yards, an increase of 40.6 percent and 30 percent, respectively, from '67. At first, the kickers howled. Then, they adjusted. By 2009, they made 72.9 percent of their field-goal attempts.

43. EA SPORTS NCAA FOOTBALL

Nothing could bring the gridiron to young people better than EA Sports NCAA Football video games. Begun in 1993 as "Bill Walsh College Football" as a partner to the popular EA property "John Madden Football" (later "Madden NFL"), it allowed gamers to control teams and players, create seasons and eventually incorporate NCAA legends into the action.

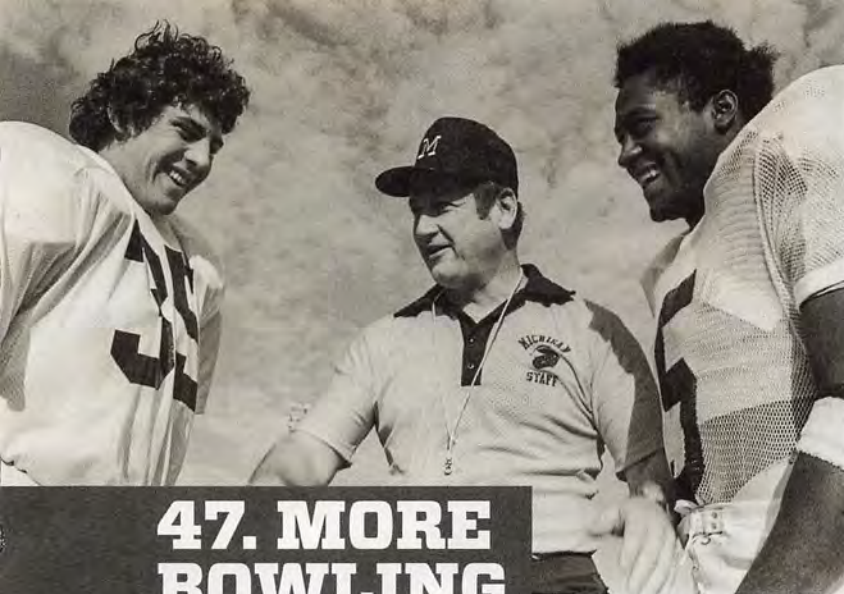
EA Sports dropped Walsh in '96 and renamed the game "College Football USA 96." Two years later, it became "NCAA Football 98," the appellation it kept until 2014, when a lawsuit by former players angry at their likenesses being used without any compensation ended the fun.



46. MAction

Let's face it: Unless you are an alumnus of a Mid-American Conference school, you won't be tuning in to random MAC games on Saturdays throughout the season. If you live in the Midwest, you are likely to watch Big Ten contests. If you live anywhere else, you have other options.

But in 1999, the MAC realized that it could increase its national profile and satisfy the cravings of football fans starving for programming by playing televised games in November on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights. MAction was born. It can wreak havoc for the coaches and their schedules — Northern Illinois didn't play on a Saturday in the final five weeks of the 2016 regular season — but that's the price of publicity. And while the average fan isn't going to pay too much attention to that Toledo-Eastern Michigan game, at least there is some football to watch in the middle of the week.



47. MORE BOWLING

From 1972-74, Michigan won 10 games every season, finished 30-2-1, tied for the conference title all three years and played in exactly zero bowl games. The Big Ten's policy that only the conference champion could enjoy the post-season — established in 1946 — was the culprit, and the Wolverines weren't too happy about it.

In 1975, both the Big Ten and Pac-8, which at the time tied their champions to the Rose Bowl, announced that teams that didn't finish first could play in bowls. That year, Big Ten runner-up Michigan fell to Oklahoma, 14-6, in the Orange Bowl, while USC, the Pac-8 fifth-place finisher, dumped Texas A&M, 20-0, in the Liberty Bowl.

48. On the Go

The explosion of youth sports did more than create a world of participation trophy-craving kids who clogged every inch of available green space on autumn Saturdays. It also robbed college football fans of their ability to watch their favorite teams, because attending Junior's age-five soccer game at 2 p.m. was way more important than watching State play Tech.

Thanks to the growth of remote technology, the disappointment of choosing family obligations over college football was over. People could stream games on their phones, tablets and computers. And since the Internet offered a much larger platform than individual TV stations, dozens more games were available than just what was aired on the flat screen. Streaming took college football everywhere, at all times and for everybody — even youth soccer hostages.

49. Numbers Game

We all know that Clemson won the 2016 national title with a thrilling comeback win over Alabama, but if it were up to the numbers, the Tide would have taken the crystal trophy by six points — at least if you believe ESPN's team efficiency ratings. That's little solace for the Tide, but it shows just how much information is available these days for college football fans. An avalanche of advanced stats measures teams' various success and failure rates in all three phases of the game and gives folks even more information to process before Saturday's kickoff. Analytics have become part of life in the professional ranks, and they are every bit as fascinating on campus, too.

50. SMURF TURF

Talk all you want about Kentucky bluegrass, but the stuff Boise State plays on is really blue. Back in 1986, the Broncos were set to install a new artificial turf field at Albertsons Stadium, and BSU's athletic director at the time, Gene Bleymaier, was upset that no one would know the school spent \$750,000 on the carpet. So, he decided to make it a distinctive color. Visitors from 37 different countries and all 50 states have checked it out, and the school isn't about to change things: In 2010, a survey revealed 90% of Boise residents love the blue turf.



FCS

PREVIEW

BY CRAIG HALEY



LANCE DUNN, NDSU

1. NORTH DAKOTA STATE (12-2, 7-1 MISSOURI VALLEY)

The Bison's five-year run as FCS national champions ended against James Madison in the 2016 playoff semifinals, but their dynasty isn't necessarily over because they're strong enough (16 returning starters) to climb back to the top of the mountain. Oh yes, coach Chris Klieman's program is probably a little more motivated this time around. With linebacker Nick DeLuca and defensive tackle Nate Tanguay returning from injuries, the veteran defense is the nation's best and also features defensive end Greg Menard and safety Tre Dempsey among its bruisers. The loss of two starters on the offensive line is a bit of a concern, but quarterback Easton Stick will spread the ball around to running backs Lance Dunn and Bruce Anderson and wide receivers Darrius Shepherd and R.J. Urzendowski. The Bison have won at least a share of six straight Missouri Valley titles and are 83-7 in that time.

MUST-SEE MATCHUPS

| | |
|----------|--|
| AUG. 26 | CHATTANOOGA VS. JACKSONVILLE STATE |
| AUG. 31 | RICHMOND AT SAM HOUSTON STATE |
| SEPT. 9 | NORTH DAKOTA STATE AT EASTERN WASHINGTON |
| SEPT. 30 | SAM HOUSTON STATE AT CENTRAL ARKANSAS |
| OCT. 14 | VILLANOVA AT JAMES MADISON |
| OCT. 28 | LEHIGH AT FORDHAM |
| NOV. 4 | CHATTANOOGA AT WOFFORD |
| NOV. 4 | NORTH DAKOTA STATE AT SOUTH DAKOTA STATE |
| NOV. 11 | RICHMOND AT JAMES MADISON |
| NOV. 11 | EASTERN WASHINGTON AT NORTH DAKOTA |

Matthew Holst/Getty Images

2. JAMES MADISON

[14-1, 8-0 CAA]

The Dukes captured the 2016 national championship in coach Mike Houston's initial season in Harrisonburg. Despite some key losses, they've reloaded for a shot at capturing back-to-back titles. Clutch quarterback Bryan Schor, the 2016 CAA Offensive Player of the Year, is back as a senior. While 1,800-yard rusher Khalid Abdullah is gone, two-time Georgia Tech leading rusher Marcus Marshall has transferred into a deep backfield alongside running backs Cardon Johnson and Trai Sharpe. The defense features end Andrew Ankrah and safety Raven Greene. The schedule is advantageous, as last year's other top CAA teams have to visit Bridgeforth Stadium. Plus, a season-opening win at East Carolina is possible.

3. SOUTH DAKOTA STATE

[9-4, 7-1 MISSOURI VALLEY]

Last year's national quarterfinalists have an FBS-level offense, led by junior quarterback and Missouri Valley Offensive Player of the Year Taryn Christian. His go-to targets, NFL prospects Dallas Goedert (tight end) and Jake Wieneke (wide receiver), combined for 170 receptions, 2,609 receiving yards and 27 touchdown catches in 2016. All-conference linebacker Christian Rozeboom was nearly the National Freshman of the Year, but the defense needs to improve for coach John Stiegelmeier's squad to meet the team's higher expectations.

4. SAM HOUSTON STATE

[12-1, 9-0 SOUTHLAND]

The Bearkats' offense could be the nation's deepest behind senior quarterback Jeremiah Briscoe, who threw an FCS single-season record 57 touchdown passes while winning the 2016 Walter Payton Award. Coach K.C. Keeler's offense has an embarrassment of riches with wide receivers Yedidiah Louis, Davion Davis and Nathan Stewart and running backs Corey Avery and Remus Bulmer. Senior defensive end P.J. Hall and linebacker

Justin Johnson must lift a defense that lost six starters. In six straight playoff appearances, the snakebitten Bearkats have been eliminated by four eventual national champs and one national runner-up.

5. NORTH DAKOTA

[9-3, 8-0 BIG SKY]

A Big Sky co-title and first-ever FCS playoff appearance have whet the appetite of a UND program that will move to the Missouri Valley Football Conference in 2020. Safety Cole Reyes, the Big Sky Defensive Player of the Year, joins cornerbacks Deion Harris and Torrey Hunt in a shutdown secondary. Senior quarterback Keaton Studsrud has improved as a passer, but he'll give many handoffs to junior running backs John Santiago and Brady Oliveira and Minnesota transfer James Johannesson.

6. EASTERN WASHINGTON

[12-2, 8-0 BIG SKY]

New coach Aaron Best has spent 20 years in the program, so the Eagles expect a smooth transition following Beau Baldwin's departure to Cal as offensive coordinator. Unfortunately for last year's national semifinalists, the early-season schedule is brutally tough, and all-world wide receiver Cooper Kupp graduated. Junior quarterback Gage Gubrud will make new connections after throwing for an FCS single-season record 5,160 yards as well as 48 TDs.

7. RICHMOND

[10-4, 5-3 CAA]

With coach Danny Rocco off to Delaware, Richmond hired Russ Huesman, the defensive coordinator of the Spiders' 2008 FCS championship team, from Chattanooga. He inherits a ready-to-win team. Two-time 3,000-yard passer Kyle Lauletta is returning from an ACL tear, and he's backed by Kevin Johnson, who helped key a run to the national quarterfinals. Injuries at running back opened the door for Deontez Thompson to surpass 1,000 yards as a redshirt freshman.

FCS ALL-AMERICA TEAM

OFFENSE

| | | | |
|----|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| QB | JEREMIAH BRISCOE | 6-3/220/SR. | SAM HOUSTON STATE |
| RB | CHASE EDMONDS | 5-9/205/SR. | FORDHAM |
| RB | ELIJAH IBITOKUN-HANKS | 5-9/199/JR. | ALBANY |
| FB | JOE PROTHEROE | 6-0/225/SR. | CAL POLY |
| WR | JUSTIN WATSON | 6-3/210/SR. | PENN |
| WR | JAKE WIENEKE | 6-4/215/SR. | SOUTH DAKOTA STATE |
| TE | DALLAS GOEDERT | 6-5/250/SR. | SOUTH DAKOTA STATE |
| C | JACOB OHNESORGE | 6-3/285/SR. | SOUTH DAKOTA STATE |
| OL | JUSTIN LEA | 6-4/290/SR. | JACKSONVILLE STATE |
| OL | BRANDON PARKER | 6-7/299/SR. | NORTH CAROLINA A&T |
| OL | TIMON PARRIS | 6-5/310/SR. | STONY BROOK |
| OL | AARON STINNIE | 6-5/290/SR. | JAMES MADISON |

DEFENSE

| | | | |
|----|----------------|--------------|----------------------|
| DL | PAT AFRIYIE | 6-2/235/SR. | COLGATE |
| DL | ANTHONY ELLIS | 6-1/245/SR. | CHARLESTON SO |
| DL | P.J. HALL | 6-1/280/SR. | SAM HOUSTON STATE |
| DL | DARIUS JACKSON | 6-3/237/SR. | JACKSONVILLE STATE |
| LB | NICK DELUCA | 6-3/240/SR. | NORTH DAKOTA STATE |
| LB | DARIUS LEONARD | 6-3/220/SR. | SOUTH CAROLINA STATE |
| LB | BRETT TAYLOR | 6-2/230/SR. | WESTERN ILLINOIS |
| DB | MARLON BRIDGES | 6-1/210/SO. | JACKSONVILLE STATE |
| DB | TRE DEMPSEY | 5-10/184/SR. | NORTH DAKOTA STATE |
| DB | COLE REYES | 6-2/215/SR. | NORTH DAKOTA |
| DB | ROB ROLLE | 6-0/190/SR. | VILLANOVA |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|----|---------------|--------------|--------------------|
| K | LANE CLARK | 5-11/170/SR. | TENNESSEE STATE |
| P | AN BERRYMAN | 6-0/205/JR. | WESTERN CAROLINA |
| KR | JOHN SANTIAGO | 5-9/180/JR. | NORTH DAKOTA |
| PR | KHRIS GARDIN | 5-7/164/SR. | NORTH CAROLINA A&T |

PROJECTED PLAYOFF QUALIFIERS

ALBANY (AT-LARGE BID)
CAL POLY (AT-LARGE BID)
CENTRAL ARKANSAS (AT-LARGE BID)
CHARLESTON SOUTHERN (BIG SOUTH CHAMP)
CHATTANOOGA (AT-LARGE BID)
DAYTON (PIONEER CHAMP)
DUQUESNE (NEC CHAMP)
EASTERN WASHINGTON (AT-LARGE BID)
FORDHAM (AT-LARGE BID)
JACKSONVILLE STATE (OVC CHAMP)
JAMES MADISON (CAA CHAMP)
LEHIGH (PATRIOT CHAMP)
NEW HAMPSHIRE (AT-LARGE BID)
NORTH DAKOTA (BIG SKY CHAMP)
NORTH DAKOTA STATE (MISSOURI VALLEY CHAMP)
NORTHERN IOWA (AT-LARGE BID)
RICHMOND (AT-LARGE BID)
SAMDOR (AT-LARGE BID)
SAM HOUSTON STATE (SOUTHLAND CHAMP)
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE (AT-LARGE BID)
VILLANOVA (AT-LARGE BID)
WESTERN ILLINOIS (AT-LARGE BID)
WOFFORD (SOUTHERN CHAMP)
YOUNGSTOWN STATE (AT-LARGE BID)

**8. VILLANOVA**

(9-4, 6-2 CAA)

The post-Andy Talley era begins under new coach Mark Ferrante, an assistant for 30 years. Dual-threat quarterback Zach Bednarczyk is one of nine returning offensive starters, and running backs Aaron Forbes and Matt Gudzak form a dynamic duo. Last year's FCS-leading defense returns safety Rob Rolle, whose seven interceptions tied for the national lead, and linebackers Ed Shockley and Jeff Steeb.

9. JACKSONVILLE STATE

(10-2, 7-0 OHIO VALLEY)

Quarterbacks Bryant Horn and Kendrick Doss hope to replace Eli Jenkins, the key to three straight unbeaten seasons in the OVC. Jenkins' loss means running back Roc Thomas will become the focal point of the offense. An outstanding defense returns eight starters, including the conference's Defensive Player of the Year (end Darius Jackson) and Freshman of the Year (safety Marlon Bridges).

10. WOFFORD

(10-4, 6-2 SOUTHERN)

Having beaten SoCon champion The Citadel in last year's playoffs, the Terriers seek to replace the Bulldogs atop the conference. They're bolstered by a stout defense, including Miles Brown and Tyler Vaughn up front, and two strong QBs to run the triple option, Brandon Goodson and Joe Newman. Coach Mike Ayers, in his 30th season, is three wins shy of 200 at Wofford.

11. NEW HAMPSHIRE

(8-5, 6-2 CAA)

A season opener against archrival Maine could jump-start the Wildcats to a 14th straight playoff appearance under coach Sean McDonnell. They need steadier play out of junior quarterback Trevor Knight, who has excellent wide receivers in Malik Love and Neil O'Connor. The future is now in the secondary with sophomores Pop Lacey and Prince Smith Jr., last year's CAA Defensive Rookie of the Year.

12. LEHIGH

(9-3, 6-0 PATRIOT)

Quarterback Brad Mayes is thrilled to have the keys to the offense because the defending Patriot League champ returns a two-time 1,000-yard rusher, Dom Bragalone, and last year's two 1,000-yard receivers, Troy Pelletier and Gatlin Casey — a trio that combined to score 42 touchdowns. Still, the Mountain Hawks have to face fellow league powers Colgate and Fordham on the road.

13. NORTHERN IOWA

(5-6, 4-4 MISSOURI VALLEY)

One of the more disappointing teams in the FCS last season (preseason No. 3) seeks to make amends. While 2016 Buck Buchanan Award winner Karter Schult graduated, the Panthers return 16 starters. A veteran offensive line will protect junior quarterback Eli Dunne. Senior linebacker Jared Farley, son of coach Mark Farley, headlines the defense.

14. YOUNGSTOWN STATE

(12-4, 6-2 MISSOURI VALLEY)

The former FCS power in the 1990s ended a 10-year playoff drought by reaching the national championship game, where the Penguins fell to James Madison. Despite losing a lot of talent, they hope to become a consistent winner under coach Bo Pelini. Quarterback Hunter Wells and running back Tevin McCaster took big steps forward down the stretch.

15. CHATTANOOGA

(9-4, 6-2 SOUTHERN)

New coach Tom Arth has made the jump from Division III John Carroll, where he knocked off both Mount Union and Wisconsin-Whitewater last year. His Mocs are retooling after losing six starters on each side of the ball, but the return of seniors Alejandro Bennifield (quarterback) and Richardre Bagley (running back) provide a good start. The Mocs have won 26 of their last 31 SoCon games.

16. CHARLESTON SOUTHERN

(7-4, 4-1 BIG SOUTH)

FBS-bound Liberty's ineligibility in the Big South race makes it easier for the Buccaneers to claim a three-peat. Mark Tucker is the new coach following Jamey Chadwell's departure to Coastal Carolina as offensive coordinator. Losses at running back mean sophomore quarterback Shane Bucenell must mature quickly. Defensive end Anthony Ellis and linebacker Solomon Brown fuel an excellent front seven.

17. CENTRAL ARKANSAS

(10-3, 8-1 SOUTHLAND)

The defense was formidable in the Bears' playoff season a year ago, and All-Southland picks George Odum and Tremon Smith return to the secondary. But the offense is primed to reach a higher level because it returns underrated quarterback Hayden Hildebrand, a stable of quality running backs and all five starters on the offensive line. The Bears will face most of the Southland powers at home.

18. SAMFORD

(7-5, 5-3 SOUTHERN)

SoCon Offensive Player of the Year Devlin Hodges passed for 4,088 yards and 36 touchdowns as a sophomore last season, and he pairs again with wide receiver Kelvin McKnight. While the Bulldogs need to improve their rushing attack, they should stop the run with a solid defensive line, backed by linebacker Shaheed Salmon and cornerback Omari Williams.

19. WESTERN ILLINOIS

(6-5, 3-5 MISSOURI VALLEY)

A 5-1 start last season, including an upset of Northern Illinois, fell apart on the Leathernecks. They return 18 starters, including the 1-2 offensive punch of quarterback Sean McGuire and running back Steve McShane, but the team's best player is All-America linebacker Brett Taylor. As a junior, he ranked No. 3 in the FCS in tackles.

20. ALBANY

(7-4, 4-4 CAA)

A return to form by junior running back Elijah Ibitokun-Hanks (1,401 rushing yards, 16 TDs), who suffered a torn ACL in the season's final game, is vital for the Great Danes as they come off their best season since joining the CAA in 2013. They need improved play at quarterback to avoid being one of the last two teams left out of the playoff field again.

21. FORDHAM

(8-3, 5-1 PATRIOT)

Denied an at-large playoff bid in 2016, the Rams want to go back in as the Patriot League champs in 2017. Senior running back Chase Edmonds (5,285 rushing yards, 69 TDs) is ready to cap a scintillating career. Opposing defenses can't just concentrate on him, though, because fifth-year senior Kevin Anderson was the league's passing leader a year ago.

22. CAL POLY

(7-5, 5-3 BIG SKY)

The Mustangs' triple option will rank among the nation's best rushing offenses

with the return of All-America fullback Joe Protheroe, slot back Kyle Lewis and an experienced offensive line. Coach Tim Walsh's squad seeks a return to the FCS playoffs, but it needs improvement against the pass. It should come with the return of senior safety B.J. Nard.

23. LIBERTY

(6-5, 4-1 BIG SOUTH)

Coach Turner Gill's squad is ineligible for the Big South title and FCS playoffs while they transition toward FBS independence in 2018, but they'll have a strong team nonetheless. Last year's youthful offense will come of age behind sophomore quarterback Stephen Calvert, while the defense has a senior standout in defensive end Juwan Wells. The special teams are outstanding.

24. MCNEESE

(6-5, 5-4 SOUTHLAND)

The Cowboys have posted 12 straight winning seasons, but they're seeking

significant improvement in coach Lance Guidry's second season in Lake Charles, La. The offense is diverse, led by quarterback James Tabary, who is coming off a 3,000-yard season, and senior running back Ryan Ross. The defense returns its top seven tacklers, including Jammerio Gross and Chris Livings, who anchor the defensive line.

25. THE CITADEL

(10-2, 8-0 SOUTHERN)

A handful of potential returning starters departed in the offseason, including two-time All-America cornerback Dee Delaney, who left via a graduate transfer to Miami (Fla.) and is a projected starter for the Canes. The losses severely dampen the Bulldogs' bid to win a third straight SoCon title. Triple-option quarterback Dominique Allen is back to guide last year's FCS-leading rushing attack, and safety Kailik Williams is the unquestioned leader in the secondary.

**CHASE EDMONDS, FORDHAM**

Setting the Table for the perfect Saturday

BY MICHAEL BRADLEY



Before every college football game, players and coaches engage in ritual preparations, so that when kickoff comes, they are ready to perform at peak levels. That process begins days in advance, with practices, meetings and treatments designed to get mind and body in the proper states to play.

Fans planning their tailgate parties engage in similar ceremonial activities to make sure their pre-game time is well spent. They prepare guest lists, go over menus, consult recipes, make shopping excursions and gather the equipment necessary to make their events successful. It doesn't matter whether two or 200 will attend; making the proper arrangements in advance guarantees a good time for everybody — no matter what the outcome of the game might be. For many, the fun beforehand is the main event.

And here are some of the places around the country where the biggest tailgating fun takes place.

Academic Program

The day before an Alabama game, the front lawns of campus buildings look like crime scenes, with yards of yellow "Caution" tape delineating fans' tailgating spots, and tables, chairs and other party essentials lying on the turf, awaiting the opportunity to help Tide fans get ready for another big win. Saturday morning, the pickups drop off food, drink and other perishables, and the UA academic buildings spring to life like no ordinary school day. The Quads is a popular place for pre-game gathering, as is the Gorgas Library, where the Million Dollar Band plays before it marches to the president's house for a brief concert.

Early Start

You know they take the Seminoles seriously in Tallahassee, and to prove it, the pre-game fun begins earlier than usual for Florida State — about 12 hours earlier. The "Downtown GetDown" takes over Adams Street the night before a game with an outdoor party designed to prime the pump for the real action on Saturday. Once game day arrives, fans pack the school's intramural fields and the parking lots around Doak Campbell Stadium to get ready. Those looking for more than just a leisurely few (or more) hours on the lawn can head over to Dick Howser Stadium (FSU's baseball field) to watch the Marching Chiefs get ready to perform during their "Skull Session."

Alabama: Wesley Hitt/Getty Images; WVU: Fred Vuich
USC: Peter Brouillet; Wisconsin: Tom Lynn

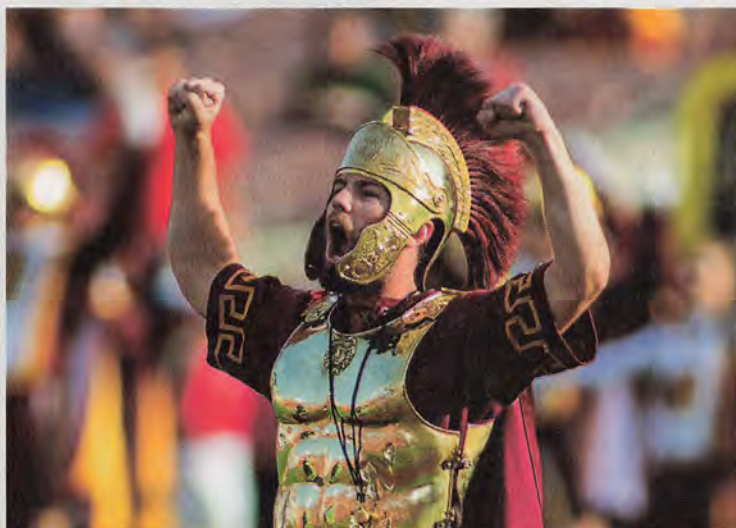


Almost Heaven

If you want to get the true West Virginia tailgating experience, pick up some pepperoni rolls at Chico Bakery and get to campus early — about 7 a.m. early, no matter what time kickoff may be. The Mountaineers fill every available bit of land around Milan Puskar Stadium and are loud, boisterous and a lot of fun. Just don't mention anything about burning couches — a WVU "tradition," win or lose — although you might just see a grill that's made up to look like one. Two hours and 20 minutes before the game, get to the corner of Don Nehlen Drive and the WVU Medical Center for the "Mountaineer Mantrip," which allows fans to welcome the team before the big game.

SoCal Style

There are plenty of beautiful venues for tailgating around the country, but it's hard to imagine anything better than what Los Angeles can offer fans. Amidst the palm trees and sunshine, USC fans prepare for games by flocking to the Trousdale Parkway — the main thoroughfare through campus — and feasting on their own culinary concoctions while also partaking in the offerings of food trucks and vendors who pack the area. Fans can follow the Spirit of Troy marching band around campus as it prepares to enter the Coliseum before the game, and everybody should kick the bases of flagpoles around the school's perimeter for good luck.



On the Town

Since Camp Randall Stadium sits in the middle of a city, there aren't spacious parking lots and lawns on which to stage tailgate parties. But if you know anything about Wisconsin fans, you are aware that they aren't going to let a lack of space keep them from their pre-game fun. Sure, there are some parking lots, but they fill up quickly. It's better to park remotely and head into town to experience the craziness of the student gigs in apartments around the stadium and to sample the fare at the dozens of bars and restaurants around the stadium. Jordan's Big Ten Pub transforms its backyard into a beer garden on game days, and the Old Fashioned restaurant serves up more than 130 beers and specializes in the cocktail of the same name — Wisconsin's unofficial drink. Leave your calorie counter at home and sample the brats, cheese curds (authentic ones squeak when you chew them) and tailgate foods of every kind.

Recipes

Compliments of



100% Natural

Ingredients

- 4 Sanderson Farms® Chicken Tenders, cut in half diagonally
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon seasoning salt
- 3 cups flour
- 2 tablespoons seasoning salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 4 cups vegetable oil

Instructions

1. Mix the buttermilk and 1 teaspoon seasoning salt in a bowl.
2. Place chicken and buttermilk in a sealable plastic bag and toss tenders to coat.
3. Refrigerate for at least 20 minutes or up to 24 hours.
4. In a separate bowl, combine flour, remaining seasoning salt, and black pepper.
5. In a 12" x 2" deep skillet, heat vegetable oil to 350°F.
6. Coat chicken with flour mixture.
7. Fry chicken tenders in three batches for 2 minutes on each side. The tenders should reach an internal temperature of 165°F. Serve with your favorite dipping sauce.

Salt & Vinegar Chicken Wings



Calories: 500 Fat: 36g Saturated Fat: 10g Sodium: 780mg
Carbohydrate: 2g Sugars: 1g Protein: 42g

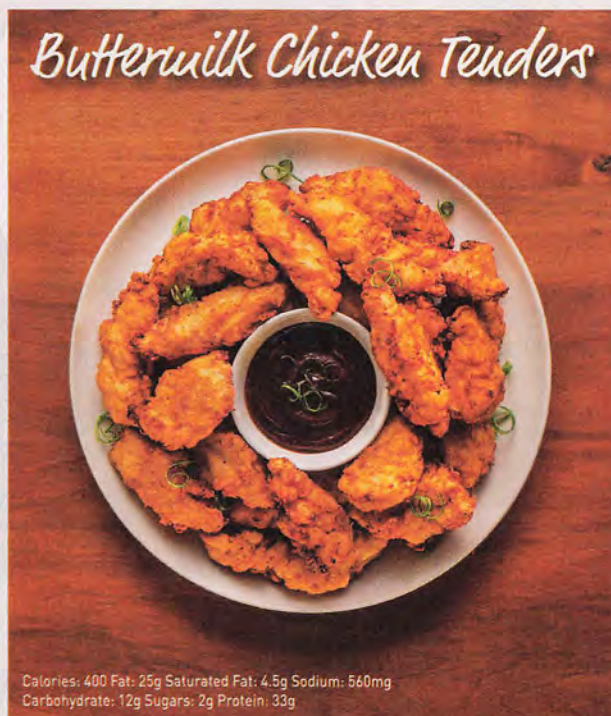
Ingredients

- 12 Sanderson Farms® Family Pack Chicken Wings, cut into thirds at the joints, wing tips removed and saved for stock
- 1/3 cup malt vinegar
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon dry parsley flakes

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 450°F.
2. Place malt vinegar and olive oil in a large sealable plastic bag, add wings and toss to coat.
3. Refrigerate for 1 hour, tossing wings occasionally.
4. Line a rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and place a baking rack on top. Coat rack with vegetable spray.
5. Combine onion powder, salt, black pepper, powdered sugar and dry parsley flakes. Set aside.
6. Place wings on rack and bake uncovered for 20 minutes.
7. Turn chicken over and bake an additional 10 minutes. Chicken should reach an internal temperature of 190°F. Place chicken in bowl, add seasoning and toss to coat.

Buttermilk Chicken Tenders



Calories: 400 Fat: 25g Saturated Fat: 4.5g Sodium: 560mg
Carbohydrate: 12g Sugars: 2g Protein: 33g



Tradition on Parade

Even though Notre Dame doesn't have too many tailgate signatures, there are few things in college football more overwhelming than the sheer history and tradition of the Fighting Irish program. Fans who arrive at Notre Dame Stadium early enough can take the Tunnel Tour, which brings them onto the field via the same route as the players. When it comes time to hunker down, the parking lots around the stadium, as well as the Burke Golf Course, are filled with steaming grills, filled cups and happy revelers hoping to "wake up the echoes" for another ND victory.

Tom Lynn



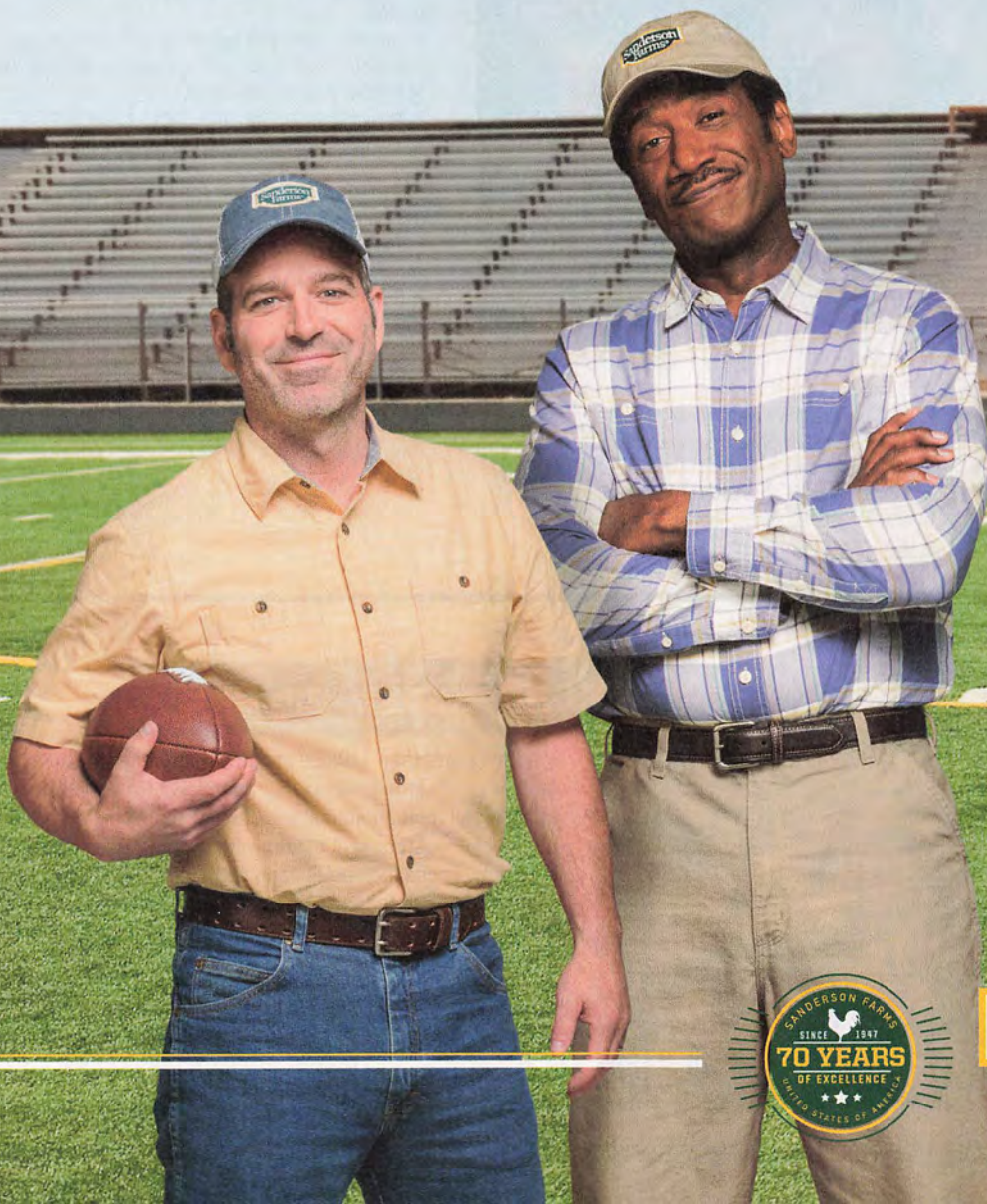
TECHNICALLY, YOU CAN WATCH

FOOTBALL

without chicken wings.

★★★ BUT WE DON'T RECOMMEND IT. ★★★

Football fans across the country have been making Sanderson Farms chicken part of their tailgate tradition for decades. We're proud to say our chicken is just as fresh and delicious today as it was the first time you tasted it. Your team may not win every game. But with fresh, tasty chicken from Sanderson Farms, you're sure to win every tailgate.



Sanderson
Farms®

GOOD, HONEST CHICKEN

Recipes

Compliments of



Ingredients

1 package Curly's
BBQ Pulled Pork
2 medium-sized
sweet potatoes (thin-
ly sliced)
¼ red onion, chopped
4 scallions, chopped
1 tomato, chopped
1 cup shredded
cheddar cheese
½ cup sour cream
EV olive oil

BBQ Pulled Pork Nachos

Prep: 5 mins • Cook: 5 mins • Serves: 5



Ingredients

1 package Curly's
Kansas City Style
16 bacon slices, cut
into fourths crosswise

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375°.
2. Separate the burnt ends from the BBQ sauce in the Curly's Kansas City Style, reserving the sauce for later.
3. Wrap bacon around 2 burnt end pieces and secure with a toothpick. Place in a 9x13-inch baking pan. Repeat with remaining burnt ends and bacon.
4. Drain grease and serve.

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Using a mandolin or a sharp knife, thinly slice sweet potatoes with the skin on. The thinner the potatoes are sliced, the crispier the chips will be.
3. In a large bowl, toss potato slices with 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil. Add salt, pepper and garlic powder.
4. Spread potato slices out evenly on a cookie sheet.
5. Bake for 10 minutes. Take out and flip the chips over to bake for another 7-8 minutes.
6. While the chips bake, heat Curly's BBQ Pulled Pork in a microwave for about 3 minutes and chop onion, tomato and scallions.
7. Once your chips are done, add them to an oven-safe dish and start layering the sweet potato nachos.
8. Start with Curly's BBQ Pulled Pork and then add shredded cheddar cheese.
9. Begin the next layer in the same order: sweet potato chips, Curly's BBQ Pulled Pork and cheese.
10. Once the chips are stacked, place them back in the oven under the broiler for about 30 seconds.
11. Take out the chips and add several dollops of sour cream, chopped tomatoes, onions, scallions and chopped jalapeños.

Big House, Big Party

When more than 110,000 people — and other assorted fans without game tickets — come to town for a Saturday of Michigan football action, you can bet that every available parcel of Ann Arbor real estate will be conscripted for tailgate duty. Those looking to hang with 20,000 or so "close" friends can head to the U-M Golf Course, where you'll hear "The Victors" at least 100 times. If you can wrangle an invitation to a party in one of the lots around Michigan Stadium, you know you have truly arrived. If you're looking for something a little quieter, just drive around near the stadium, and you'll find someone willing to offer their front lawn to be your little slice of tailgating heaven — and maybe even let you use their bathroom.

Tom Lynn



TAKE A FLAVORFUL ROAD TRIP!

SWEET AND TANGY. TENDER AND JUICY. SIMMERED AND SPICY.
GET A TASTE OF THE STATES WITHOUT LEAVING HOME.



CHEF CLARA'S PULLED PORK BELLY TACOS

Prep: 10 min | Cook: 10 min | Serves: 7

- 1 package Curly's RoadTrip Eats Alabama Style
- 7 flour tortillas

Cilantro Slaw

- 3 cups green and purple cabbage, shredded
- 1 cup carrot, shredded
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup champagne vinegar
- 1 teaspoon celery seed
- 2 bunches of cilantro, chopped
- ¼ cup sugar
- salt and pepper

1. Heat oven to 300°. Wrap flour tortillas in aluminum foil and set inside oven to keep warm.
2. Put all slaw ingredients inside large mixing bowl and incorporate evenly, season with salt and pepper as desired.
3. Heat Curly's Alabama Style according to packaged label directions.
4. Remove flour tortillas from oven and assemble tacos, fill with pork belly and cilantro slaw.



FIND YOUR FLAVOR ADVENTURE AT ROADTRIPLEATS.COM

TOP 200 RECRUITING REPORT

presented by



RANKINGS PROVIDED BY

247COMPOSITE

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School | Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|---------------------------|--|-----|------|-----|---------------|------------------------|--|-----|------|-----|----------------|
| 1. Jaelan Phillips | Redlands East Valley (Redlands, CA) | DE | 6-6 | 253 | UCLA | 51. D.J. Matthews | Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL) | WR | 5-11 | 160 | Florida State |
| 2. Cam Akers | Clinton (Clinton, MS) | RB | 5-11 | 213 | Florida State | 52. Tyler Shelvin | Notre Dame (Crowley, LA) | DT | 6-3 | 376 | LSU |
| 3. Najee Harris | Antioch (Antioch, CA) | RB | 6-3 | 226 | Alabama | 53. Paris Ford | Steel Valley (Munhall, PA) | S | 6-1 | 180 | Pittsburgh |
| 4. Alex Leatherwood | Washington (Pensacola, FL) | OT | 6-6 | 327 | Alabama | 54. Josh Myers | Miamisburg (Miamisburg, OH) | OG | 6-6 | 306 | Ohio State |
| 5. Foster Sarell | Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA) | OT | 6-7 | 311 | Stanford | 55. A.J. Terrell | Westlake (Atlanta, GA) | CB | 6-2 | 180 | Clemson |
| 6. Marvin Wilson | Episcopal (Bellaire, TX) | DT | 6-4 | 329 | Florida State | 56. Luiji Vilain | Episcopal (Alexandria, VA) | DE | 6-4 | 242 | Michigan |
| 7. Jeffrey Okudah | South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX) | CB | 6-2 | 190 | Ohio State | 57. Tate Martell | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | QB | 5-11 | 203 | Ohio State |
| 8. Chase Young | DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD) | DE | 6-5 | 251 | Ohio State | 58. Xavier McKinney | Roswell (Roswell, GA) | S | 6-1 | 192 | Alabama |
| 9. Joshua Kaindoh | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | DE | 6-6 | 250 | Florida State | 59. Isaiah Pryor | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | S | 6-2 | 195 | Ohio State |
| 10. Walker Little | Episcopal (Bellaire, TX) | OT | 6-7 | 315 | Stanford | 60. Marlon Tuipulotu | Central (Independence, OR) | DT | 6-2 | 295 | USC |
| 11. Baron Browning | Kennedale (Kennedale, TX) | LB | 6-2 | 229 | Ohio State | 61. Bubba Bolden | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | S | 6-2 | 192 | USC |
| 12. Donovan Peoples-Jones | Cass Technical (Detroit, MI) | WR | 6-2 | 193 | Michigan | 62. Jacob Phillips | East Magnet School (Nashville, TN) | LB | 6-4 | 228 | LSU |
| 13. Dylan Moses | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | LB | 6-3 | 310 | Alabama | 63. Anthony Hines | Plano East (Plano, TX) | LB | 6-3 | 222 | Texas A&M |
| 14. Trey Smith | University School (Jackson, TN) | OT | 6-4 | 310 | Tennessee | 64. Devonta Smith | Amite (Amite, LA) | WR | 6-1 | 160 | Alabama |
| 15. Davis Mills | Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA) | QB | 6-3 | 192 | Stanford | 65. Grant Delpit | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | S | 6-4 | 181 | LSU |
| 16. Isaiah Wilson | Poly Prep (Brooklyn, NY) | OT | 6-7 | 350 | Georgia | 66. Deommodore Lenoir | Salesian (Los Angeles, CA) | CB | 5-11 | 191 | Oregon |
| 17. Shaun Wade | Trinity Christian (Jacksonville, FL) | CB | 6-1 | 177 | Ohio State | 67. Brock Wright | Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX) | TE | 6-5 | 243 | Notre Dame |
| 18. JaCoby Stevens | Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN) | S | 6-1 | 200 | LSU | 68. Ty Chandler | MBA (Nashville, TN) | RB | 5-11 | 187 | Tennessee |
| 19. Tee Higgins | Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN) | WR | 6-5 | 188 | Clemson | 69. Tedarrell Staton | American Heritage (Plantation, FL) | OG | 6-5 | 360 | Florida |
| 20. Stephen Carr | Summit (Fontana, CA) | RB | 6-0 | 202 | USC | 70. Haskell Garrett | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | DT | 6-2 | 288 | Ohio State |
| 21. Jerry Jeudy | Deerfield Beach (Deerfield Beach, FL) | WR | 6-1 | 177 | Alabama | 71. Navaughn Donaldson | Miami Central (Miami, FL) | OT | 6-6 | 335 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 22. Richard LeCounte III | Liberty County (Hinesville, GA) | S | 5-11 | 174 | Georgia | 72. D.J. Johnson | Luther Burbank (Sacramento, CA) | DE | 6-5 | 240 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 23. Darnay Holmes | Calabasas (Calabasas, CA) | CB | 5-10 | 190 | UCLA | 73. Willie Gay | Starkville (Starkville, MS) | LB | 6-2 | 223 | Miss. State |
| 24. Wyatt Davis | St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA) | OG | 6-5 | 310 | Ohio State | 74. Jamyest Williams | Grayson (Loganville, GA) | CB | 5-9 | 174 | South Carolina |
| 25. Aubrey Solomon | Lee County (Leesburg, GA) | DT | 6-3 | 288 | Michigan | 75. Jhamon Ausbon | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | WR | 6-3 | 217 | Texas A&M |
| 26. LaBryan Ray | James Clemens (Madison, AL) | DE | 6-4 | 260 | Alabama | 76. Jack Anderson | Frisco (Frisco, TX) | OG | 6-5 | 300 | Texas Tech |
| 27. Calvin Ashley | St. John's College HS (Washington, D.C.) | OT | 6-6 | 310 | Auburn | 77. Henry Ruggs III | Robert E. Lee (Montgomery, AL) | WR | 6-0 | 175 | Alabama |
| 28. Khalan Laborn | Bishop Sullivan (Virginia Beach, VA) | RB | 5-10 | 199 | Florida State | 78. Maleik Gray | LaVergne (LaVergne, TN) | S | 6-2 | 190 | Tennessee |
| 29. A.J. Epenesa | Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL) | DE | 6-5 | 260 | Iowa | 79. Justin Broiles | John Marshall (Oklahoma City, OK) | CB | 6-0 | 175 | Oklahoma |
| 30. Hunter Johnson | Brownsburg (Brownsburg, IN) | QB | 6-2 | 201 | Clemson | 80. Drew Singleton | Paramus Catholic (Paramus, NJ) | LB | 6-2 | 215 | Michigan |
| 31. Joseph Lewis | Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA) | WR | 6-2 | 204 | USC | 81. Robert Hainsey | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | OG | 6-5 | 276 | Notre Dame |
| 32. Tua Tagovailoa | St. Louis (Honolulu, HI) | QB | 6-1 | 212 | Alabama | 82. Thomas Graham | Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA) | CB | 5-11 | 175 | Oregon |
| 33. D'Andre Swift | St. Joseph's (Philadelphia, PA) | RB | 5-9 | 212 | Georgia | 83. VanDarius Cowan | Palm Beach Gardens (Palm Beach Gardens, FL) | LB | 6-4 | 226 | Alabama |
| 34. Jedrick Wills | Lafayette (Lexington, KY) | OT | 6-5 | 218 | Alabama | 84. Cole Kmet | St. Viator (Arlington Heights, IL) | TE | 6-5 | 230 | Notre Dame |
| 35. Austin Jackson | North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ) | OT | 6-6 | 280 | USC | 85. Jaylon Johnson | Central East (Fresno, CA) | CB | 6-1 | 181 | Utah |
| 36. Colby Parkinson | Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA) | TE | 6-7 | 228 | Stanford | 86. Todd Harris | Plaquemine (Plaquemine, LA) | S | 6-0 | 180 | LSU |
| 37. K'Lavon Chaisson | North Shore (Houston, TX) | DE | 6-4 | 220 | LSU | 87. C.J. Thorpe | Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, PA) | OG | 6-3 | 318 | Penn State |
| 38. Stanford Samuels | Charles W. Flanagan (Hollywood, FL) | CB | 6-2 | 175 | Florida State | 88. Tyrell Shavers | Lewisville (Lewisville, TX) | WR | 6-6 | 196 | Alabama |
| 39. Trevon Grimes | St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | WR | 6-3 | 202 | Ohio State | 89. Neteri Johnson | Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA) | OG | 6-3 | 341 | Georgia |
| 40. Jeff Thomas | East St. Louis (East St. Louis, IL) | WR | 5-10 | 175 | Miami (Fla.) | 90. Kary Vincent | Memorial (Port Arthur, TX) | CB | 5-11 | 170 | LSU |
| 41. Jay Tufele | Bingham (South Jordan, UT) | DT | 6-3 | 297 | USC | 91. Jalen Reagor | Waxahachie (Waxahachie, TX) | WR | 5-11 | 195 | TCU |
| 42. Andrew Thomas | Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA) | OT | 6-5 | 335 | Georgia | 92. Levi Jones | Westlake (Austin, TX) | LB | 6-3 | 215 | USC |
| 43. J.K. Dobbins | La Grange (La Grange, TX) | RB | 5-10 | 199 | Ohio State | 93. Jarez Parks | Sebastian River (Sebastian, FL) | DE | 6-3 | 253 | Alabama |
| 44. Cesar Ruiz | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | C | 6-3 | 315 | Michigan | 94. Ambry Thomas | Martin Luther King (Detroit, MI) | CB | 6-0 | 174 | Michigan |
| 45. Devon Hunter | Indian River (Chesapeake, VA) | S | 6-1 | 205 | Virginia Tech | 95. Jake Moretti | Pomona (Arvada, CO) | OT | 6-5 | 285 | Colorado |
| 46. Lamont Wade | Clairton (Clairton, PA) | CB | 5-9 | 190 | Penn State | 96. Cyrus Fagan | Mainland (Daytona Beach, FL) | S | 6-2 | 182 | Florida State |
| 47. Jake Fromm | Houston County (Warner Robins, GA) | QB | 6-1 | 229 | Georgia | 97. Robert Barnes | Carroll (Southlake, TX) | S | 6-3 | 194 | Oklahoma |
| 48. Austin Deculus | Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX) | OT | 6-6 | 331 | LSU | 98. Markail Benton | Central (Phenix City, AL) | LB | 6-2 | 237 | Alabama |
| 49. DeAngelo Gibbs | Grayson (Loganville, GA) | S | 6-2 | 204 | Georgia | 99. Phidarian Mathis | Neville (Monroe, LA) | DT | 6-4 | 287 | Alabama |
| 50. Tyjon Lindsey | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | WR | 5-9 | 161 | Nebraska | 100. Anthony McFarland | DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD) | RB | 5-9 | 203 | Maryland |

TOP 200 RECRUITING REPORT

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| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School | Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|----------------------------|---|-----|------|-----|----------------|----------------------------|---|-----|------|-----|----------------|
| 101. Tyrese Robinson | Boyd (McKinney, TX) | OG | 6-4 | 310 | Oklahoma | 151. Justin Foster | Crest (Shelby, NC) | DE | 6-4 | 250 | Clemson |
| 102. Greg Johnson | Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA) | ATH | 5-10 | 185 | USC | 152. Damion Miller | John Tyler (Tyler, TX) | WR | 6-1 | 193 | Texas |
| 103. T.D. Moultry | Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, AL) | LB | 6-2 | 225 | Auburn | 153. Brad Stewart | McDonogh 35 (New Orleans, LA) | CB | 6-0 | 194 | Florida |
| 104. Jack Sears | San Clemente (San Clemente, CA) | QB | 6-3 | 200 | USC | 154. Chaz Ah You | Timpview (Provo, UT) | S | 6-2 | 199 | BYU |
| 105. Robert Beal | Peachtree Ridge (Suwanee, GA) | DE | 6-4 | 230 | Georgia | 155. Alex Perry | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | CB | 5-11 | 178 | Arizona State |
| 106. Christopher Allen | Southern Lab School (Baton Rouge, LA) | LB | 6-4 | 234 | Alabama | 156. CeeDee Lamb | Foster (Richmond, TX) | WR | 6-3 | 172 | Oklahoma |
| 107. Jordan Anthony | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | LB | 6-0 | 220 | Michigan | 157. Lynn Bowden | Warren G. Harding (Youngstown, OH) | ATH | 6-1 | 185 | Kentucky |
| 108. Kellen Mond | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | QB | 6-3 | 201 | Texas A&M | 158. Toneil Carter | Langham Creek (Houston, TX) | RB | 5-11 | 197 | Texas |
| 109. Paulson Adebo | Mansfield (Mansfield, TX) | CB | 6-2 | 180 | Stanford | 159. Derrick Tucker | Manvel (Manvel, TX) | S | 6-2 | 194 | Texas A&M |
| 110. Salvon Ahmed | Juanita (Kirkland, WA) | ATH | 6-0 | 185 | Washington | 160. Cordarrian Richardson | Trezevant (Memphis, TN) | RB | 5-11 | 220 | UCF |
| 111. Hamsah Nasirildeen | Concord (Concord, NC) | S | 6-3 | 210 | Florida State | 161. Omar Manning | Lancaster (Lancaster, TX) | WR | 6-2 | 214 | TCU |
| 112. Alijah Vera-Tucker | Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA) | OT | 6-4 | 291 | USC | 162. Nick Brahms | Navarre (Navarre, FL) | OG | 6-4 | 285 | Auburn |
| 113. Chuck Filiaga | Aledo (Aledo, TX) | OT | 6-6 | 335 | Michigan | 163. Montaric Brown | Ashdown (Ashdown, AR) | S | 6-0 | 182 | Arkansas |
| 114. James Robinson | Lakeland (Lakeland, FL) | WR | 6-4 | 205 | Florida | 164. Hunter Bryant | Eastside Catholic (Sammamish, WA) | TE | 6-3 | 238 | Washington |
| 115. Amari Rodgers | Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN) | WR | 5-10 | 221 | Clemson | 165. Nate McBride | Vidalia Comprehensive (Vidalia, GA) | LB | 6-1 | 223 | Georgia |
| 116. Isaiah Pola-Mao | Mountain Pointe (Phoenix, AZ) | S | 6-4 | 200 | USC | 166. Devan Barrett | Tampa Catholic (Tampa, FL) | RB | 6-0 | 190 | Auburn |
| 117. Tylan Wallace | South Hills (Fort Worth, TX) | WR | 6-0 | 179 | Oklahoma State | 167. Wes Harris | Aledo (Aledo, TX) | OG | 6-4 | 290 | TCU |
| 118. Daniel Wright | Boyd Anderson (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | S | 6-1 | 187 | Alabama | 168. Keytaon Thompson | Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA) | QB | 6-4 | 225 | Miss. State |
| 119. Sam Ehlinger | Westlake (Austin, TX) | QB | 6-2 | 215 | Texas | 169. Charleston Rambo | Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX) | WR | 6-2 | 170 | Oklahoma |
| 120. Greg Rogers | Arbor View (Las Vegas, NV) | DT | 6-3 | 305 | UCLA | 170. Oliver Martin | West Senior (Iowa City, IA) | WR | 6-1 | 188 | Michigan |
| 121. Joshua Lugg | North Allegheny (Wexford, PA) | OT | 6-7 | 293 | Notre Dame | 171. Aaron Banks | El Cerrito (El Cerrito, CA) | OT | 6-7 | 315 | Notre Dame |
| 122. Tarik Black | Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT) | WR | 6-4 | 208 | Michigan | 172. Avery Roberts | Concord (Wilmington, DE) | LB | 6-1 | 220 | Nebraska |
| 123. Dylan McCaffrey | Valor Christian (Littleton, CO) | QB | 6-5 | 196 | Michigan | 173. Connor Wedington | Sumner (Sumner, WA) | ATH | 6-0 | 189 | Stanford |
| 124. Levi Draper | Collinsville (Collinsville, OK) | LB | 6-4 | 222 | Oklahoma | 174. Jake Lawler | South Mecklenburg (Charlotte, NC) | DE | 6-4 | 225 | North Carolina |
| 125. Jeremiah Holloman | Newton (Covington, GA) | WR | 6-2 | 195 | Georgia | 175. Deon Jones | Potomac (Oxon Hill, MD) | CB | 6-1 | 180 | Maryland |
| 126. Brendon White | Olentangy Liberty (Powell, OH) | ATH | 6-2 | 200 | Ohio State | 176. Jordan Williams | Frank W. Cox (Virginia Beach, VA) | DE | 6-5 | 260 | Clemson |
| 127. Zachary Carter | Hillsborough (Tampa, FL) | DE | 6-5 | 250 | Florida | 177. Leonard Warner | Brookwood (Snellville, GA) | LB | 6-4 | 226 | Florida State |
| 128. Addison Gumbs | Stellar Prep (Hayward, CA) | DE | 6-4 | 220 | Oklahoma | 178. Chris Robison | Horn (Mesquite, TX) | QB | 6-2 | 192 | Oklahoma |
| 129. Hunter Echols | Cathedral (Los Angeles, CA) | DE | 6-4 | 231 | USC | 179. Chadarius Townsend | Tanner (Tanner, AL) | ATH | 6-0 | 190 | Alabama |
| 130. OrTre Smith | Wando (Mount Pleasant, SC) | WR | 6-3 | 215 | South Carolina | 180. Hezekiah Jones | Stafford (Stafford, TX) | WR | 6-0 | 193 | Texas A&M |
| 131. D.D. Bowie | Morton (Morton, MS) | WR | 6-1 | 170 | Ole Miss | 181. Markaviest Bryant | Crisp County (Cordele, GA) | DE | 6-4 | 226 | Auburn |
| 132. Micah Clark | St. John Vianney (Holmdel, NJ) | OT | 6-5 | 265 | Rutgers | 182. Nathan Proctor | Henry E. Lackey (Indian Head, MD) | LB | 6-3 | 200 | Virginia Tech |
| 133. Osiris St. Brown | Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA) | WR | 6-2 | 181 | Stanford | 183. Amir Riep | Colerain (Cincinnati, OH) | CB | 5-11 | 185 | Ohio State |
| 134. Mark Webb | Archbishop Wood (Warminster, PA) | WR | 6-2 | 195 | Georgia | 184. Jaylen Harris | Cleveland Heights (Cleveland, OH) | WR | 6-5 | 210 | Ohio State |
| 135. Christopher Henderson | Columbus (Miami, FL) | CB | 6-1 | 175 | Florida | 185. Trey Sermon | Sprayberry (Marietta, GA) | RB | 6-1 | 215 | Oklahoma |
| 136. Nico Collins | Clay-Chalkville (Pinson, AL) | WR | 6-5 | 195 | Michigan | 186. Austin Troxell | Madison Academy (Madison, AL) | OT | 6-7 | 335 | Auburn |
| 137. Jaden Hunter | Westlake (Atlanta, GA) | LB | 6-2 | 212 | Georgia | 187. Elijah Molden | West Linn (West Linn, OR) | CB | 5-11 | 185 | Washington |
| 138. Elijah Blades | John Muir (Pasadena, CA) | CB | 6-2 | 170 | Nebraska | 188. Kendall Randolph | Bob Jones (Madison, AL) | OG | 6-4 | 310 | Alabama |
| 139. Eno Benjamin | Wylie East (Wylie, TX) | RB | 5-10 | 204 | Arizona State | 189. William Poole II | Hapeville Charter (Atlanta, GA) | CB | 6-0 | 180 | Georgia |
| 140. Josh Falo | Inderkum (Sacramento, CA) | TE | 6-5 | 235 | USC | 190. Sean Clifford | St. Xavier (Cincinnati, OH) | QB | 6-2 | 210 | Penn State |
| 141. Ja'Ten Parks | Newberry (Newberry, FL) | DT | 6-3 | 288 | Florida State | 191. Markquese Bell | Bridgeton (Bridgeton, NJ) | ATH | 6-3 | 194 | Maryland |
| 142. Zaquandre White | North Fort Myers (North Fort Myers, FL) | RB | 6-0 | 210 | Florida State | 192. Jaylon Redd | Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA) | CB | 5-9 | 180 | Oregon |
| 143. Chevin Calloway | Bishop Dunne (Dallas, TX) | CB | 5-10 | 180 | Arkansas | 193. N'Kosi Perry | Vanguard (Ocala, FL) | QB | 6-4 | 176 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 144. Tre Brown | Union (Tulsa, OK) | CB | 5-11 | 178 | Oklahoma | 194. Edward Ingram | DeSoto (DeSoto, TX) | OG | 6-4 | 325 | LSU |
| 145. Myles Brennan | St. Stanislaus (Bay St. Louis, MS) | QB | 6-3 | 180 | LSU | 195. Marcus Williamson | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | CB | 5-9 | 180 | Ohio State |
| 146. Tray Bishop | Terrell County (Dawson, GA) | CB | 6-2 | 200 | Georgia | 196. Henry Bainivalu | Skyline (Sammamish, WA) | OT | 6-6 | 290 | Washington |
| 147. Jonah Melton | Eastern Alamance (Mebane, NC) | OG | 6-4 | 295 | North Carolina | 197. Shawn Robinson | DeSoto (DeSoto, TX) | QB | 6-2 | 215 | TCU |
| 148. Malik Herring | Mary Persons (Forsyth, GA) | DE | 6-4 | 265 | Georgia | 198. Marco Wilson | American Heritage (Plantation, FL) | CB | 6-0 | 180 | Florida |
| 149. Darnell Ewell | Lake Taylor (Norfolk, VA) | DT | 6-4 | 295 | Notre Dame | 199. Taqoun Graham | Temple (Temple, TX) | DE | 6-3 | 255 | Texas |
| 150. Brian Robinson | Hillcrest (Tuscaloosa, AL) | RB | 6-1 | 224 | Alabama | 200. Walter Grant | Cairo (Cairo, GA) | LB | 6-4 | 236 | Georgia |

BY POSITION RECRUITING REPORT

RANKINGS PROVIDED BY

247COMPOSITE

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Wrangler

QUARTERBACKS

| Player | High School | Ht | Wt | School |
|------------------------|--|------|-----|-------------------|
| 1. Davis Mills | Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA) | 6-3 | 192 | Stanford |
| 2. Hunter Johnson | Brownsburg (Brownsburg, IN) | 6-2 | 201 | Clemson |
| 3. Tua Tagovailoa | St. Louis (Honolulu, HI) | 6-1 | 212 | Alabama |
| 4. Jake Fromm | Houston County (Warner Robins, GA) | 6-1 | 229 | Georgia |
| 5. Tate Martell | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | 5-11 | 203 | Ohio State |
| 6. Jack Sears | San Clemente (San Clemente, CA) | 6-3 | 200 | USC |
| 7. Kellen Mond | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | 6-3 | 201 | Texas A&M |
| 8. Sam Ehlinger | Westlake (Austin, TX) | 6-2 | 215 | Texas |
| 9. Dylan McCaffrey | Valor Christian (Highlands Ranch, CO) | 6-5 | 196 | Michigan |
| 10. Myles Brennan | St. Stanislaus (Bay St. Louis, MS) | 6-3 | 180 | LSU |
| 11. Keytaon Thompson | Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA) | 6-4 | 225 | Mississippi State |
| 12. Chris Robison | Horn (Mesquite, TX) | 6-2 | 192 | Oklahoma |
| 13. Sean Clifford | St. Xavier (Cincinnati, OH) | 6-2 | 210 | Penn State |
| 14. N'Kosi Perry | Vanguard (Ocala, FL) | 6-4 | 176 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 15. Shawn Robinson | DeSoto (DeSoto, TX) | 6-2 | 215 | TCU |
| 16. Tristan Gebbia | Calabasas (Calabasas, CA) | 6-3 | 180 | Nebraska |
| 17. Kasim Hill | St. John's College HS (Washington, D.C.) | 6-3 | 215 | Maryland |
| 18. Avery Davis | Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX) | 5-11 | 192 | Notre Dame |
| 19. Lowell Narcisse | St. James (St. James, LA) | 6-3 | 224 | LSU |
| 20. Chase Brice | Grayson (Loganville, GA) | 6-2 | 207 | Clemson |
| 21. Mac Jones | The Bolles School (Jacksonville, FL) | 6-2 | 180 | Alabama |
| 22. Bailey Hockman | McEachern (Powder Springs, GA) | 6-2 | 192 | Florida State |
| 23. Braxton Burmeister | La Jolla Country Day (La Jolla, CA) | 6-1 | 196 | Oregon |
| 24. Hendon Hooker | Dudley (Greensboro, NC) | 6-4 | 204 | Virginia Tech |
| 25. Chase Garbers | Corona del Mar (Newport Beach, CA) | 6-3 | 205 | Cal |
| 26. Tommy DeVito | Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, NJ) | 6-2 | 193 | Syracuse |
| 27. Ryan Kelley | Basha (Chandler, AZ) | 6-3 | 188 | Arizona State |
| 28. Danny Clark | Archbishop Hoban (Akron, OH) | 6-4 | 223 | Kentucky |
| 29. James Blackman | Glades Central (Belle Glade, FL) | 6-5 | 163 | Florida State |
| 30. Daulton Hyatt | Etowah (Attalla, AL) | 6-4 | 182 | Arkansas |

WIDE RECEIVERS

| Player | High School | Ht | Wt | School |
|--------------------------|--|------|-----|----------------|
| 1. Donovan Peoples-Jones | Cass Technical (Detroit, MI) | 6-2 | 193 | Michigan |
| 2. Tee Higgins | Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN) | 6-5 | 188 | Clemson |
| 3. Jerry Jeudy | Deerfield Beach (Deerfield Beach, FL) | 6-1 | 177 | Alabama |
| 4. Joseph Lewis | Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA) | 6-2 | 204 | USC |
| 5. Trevon Grimes | St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | 6-3 | 202 | Ohio State |
| 6. Jeff Thomas | East St. Louis (East St. Louis, IL) | 5-10 | 175 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 7. Tyjon Lindsey | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | 5-9 | 161 | Nebraska |
| 8. D.J. Matthews | Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL) | 5-11 | 160 | Florida State |
| 9. Devonta Smith | Amite (Amite, LA) | 6-1 | 160 | Alabama |
| 10. Jhamon Ausbon | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | 6-3 | 217 | Texas A&M |
| 11. Henry Ruggs III | Robert E. Lee (Montgomery, AL) | 6-0 | 175 | Alabama |
| 12. Tyrell Shavers | Lewisville (Lewisville, TX) | 6-6 | 196 | Alabama |
| 13. Jalen Reagor | Waxahachie (Waxahachie, TX) | 5-11 | 195 | TCU |
| 14. James Robinson | Lakeland (Lakeland, FL) | 6-4 | 205 | Florida |
| 15. Amari Rodgers | Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN) | 5-10 | 221 | Clemson |
| 16. Tylan Wallace | South Hills (Fort Worth, TX) | 6-0 | 179 | Oklahoma State |
| 17. Tarik Black | Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT) | 6-4 | 208 | Michigan |
| 18. Jeremiah Holloman | Newton (Covington, GA) | 6-2 | 195 | Georgia |
| 19. OrTre Smith | Wando (Mount Pleasant, SC) | 6-3 | 215 | South Carolina |
| 20. D.D. Bowie | Morton (Morton, MS) | 6-1 | 170 | Ole Miss |
| 21. Osiris St. Brown | Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA) | 6-2 | 181 | Stanford |
| 22. Mark Webb | Archbishop Wood (Warminster, PA) | 6-2 | 195 | Georgia |
| 23. Nico Collins | Clay-Chalkville (Pinson, AL) | 6-5 | 195 | Michigan |
| 24. Damien Miller | John Tyler (Tyler, TX) | 6-1 | 193 | Texas |
| 25. CeeDee Lamb | Foster (Richmond, TX) | 6-3 | 172 | Oklahoma |
| 26. Omar Manning | Lancaster (Lancaster, TX) | 6-2 | 214 | TCU |
| 27. Charleston Rambo | Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX) | 6-2 | 170 | Oklahoma |
| 28. Oliver Martin | West Senior (Iowa City, IA) | 6-1 | 188 | Michigan |
| 29. Hezekiah Jones | Stafford (Stafford, TX) | 6-0 | 193 | Texas A&M |
| 30. Jaylen Harris | Cleveland Heights (Cleveland, OH) | 6-5 | 210 | Ohio State |

RUNNING BACKS

| Player | High School | Ht | Wt | School |
|---------------------------|---|------|-----|-------------------|
| 1. Cam Akers | Clinton (Clinton, MS) | 5-11 | 213 | Florida State |
| 2. Najee Harris | Antioch (Antioch, CA) | 6-3 | 226 | Alabama |
| 3. Stephen Carr | Summit (Fontana, CA) | 6-0 | 202 | USC |
| 4. Khalan Laborn | Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA) | 5-10 | 199 | Florida State |
| 5. D'Andre Swift | St. Joseph's (Philadelphia, PA) | 5-9 | 212 | Georgia |
| 6. J.K. Dobbins | La Grange (La Grange, TX) | 5-10 | 199 | Ohio State |
| 7. Ty Chandler | MBA (Nashville, TN) | 5-11 | 187 | Tennessee |
| 8. Anthony McFarland | DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD) | 5-9 | 203 | Maryland |
| 9. Eno Benjamin | Wylie East (Wylie, TX) | 5-10 | 204 | Arizona State |
| 10. Zaquandre White | North Fort Myers (North Fort Myers, FL) | 6-0 | 210 | Florida State |
| 11. Brian Robinson | Hillcrest (Tuscaloosa, AL) | 6-1 | 224 | Alabama |
| 12. Tioneil Carter | Lanham Creek (Houston, TX) | 5-11 | 197 | Texas |
| 13. Cordarran Richardson | Trezevant (Memphis, TN) | 5-11 | 220 | UCF |
| 14. Devan Barrett | Tampa Catholic (Tampa, FL) | 6-0 | 190 | Auburn |
| 15. Trey Sermon | Sprayberry (Marietta, GA) | 6-1 | 215 | Oklahoma |
| 16. Kylin Hill | Columbus (Columbus, MS) | 5-11 | 210 | Mississippi State |
| 17. Sione Heimuli-Lund | Brighton (Salt Lake City, UT) | 6-1 | 237 | Stanford |
| 18. Kennedy Brooks | Mansfield (Mansfield, TX) | 6-0 | 197 | Oklahoma |
| 19. Travis Etienne | Jennings (Jennings, LA) | 5-11 | 210 | Clemson |
| 20. Nathan Tilford | Colony (Ontario, CA) | 6-2 | 190 | Arizona |
| 21. Colin Wilson | Clay (Green Cove Springs, FL) | 6-1 | 220 | Louisville |
| 22. A.J. Davis | Lakeland (Lakeland, FL) | 5-11 | 190 | Pittsburgh |
| 23. C.J. Holmes | Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT) | 6-0 | 200 | Notre Dame |
| 24. O'Maury Samuels | Los Lunas (Los Lunas, NM) | 5-11 | 190 | Michigan |
| 25. Todd Sibley | Archbishop Hoban (Akron, OH) | 5-10 | 214 | Pittsburgh |
| 26. Chase Hayden | St. George's (Collierville, TN) | 5-10 | 189 | Arkansas |
| 27. Chuba Hubbard | Bev Facey (Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada) | 6-1 | 190 | Oklahoma State |
| 28. Jonathan Taylor | Salem (Salem, NJ) | 6-0 | 211 | Wisconsin |
| 29. Clyde Edwards-Helaire | Catholic (Baton Rouge, LA) | 5-7 | 191 | LSU |
| 30. Kaegun Williams | Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX) | 5-9 | 190 | San Diego State |

TIGHT ENDS

| Player | High School | Ht | Wt | School |
|--------------------|---|-----|-----|----------------|
| 1. Colby Parkinson | Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA) | 6-7 | 228 | Stanford |
| 2. Brock Wright | Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX) | 6-5 | 243 | Notre Dame |
| 3. Cole Kmet | St. Viator (Arlington Heights, IL) | 6-5 | 230 | Notre Dame |
| 4. Josh Falo | Inderkum (Sacramento, CA) | 6-5 | 235 | USC |
| 5. Hunter Bryant | Eastside Catholic (Sammamish, WA) | 6-3 | 238 | Washington |
| 6. Grant Calcatera | Santa Margarita Catholic (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA) | 6-4 | 207 | Oklahoma |
| 7. Matt Dotson | Archbishop Moeller (Cincinnati, OH) | 6-5 | 235 | Michigan State |
| 8. Charles Reeves | Stuebenville (Stuebenville, OH) | 6-5 | 230 | Pittsburgh |
| 9. Major Tension | Bullard (Bullard, TX) | 6-6 | 230 | Alabama |
| 10. Kemore Gamble | Miami Southridge (Miami, FL) | 6-4 | 216 | Florida |



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OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

| Player | High School | Ht | Wt | School |
|------------------------|--|-----|-----|----------------|
| 1. Alex Leatherwood | Washington (Pensacola, FL) | 6-6 | 327 | Alabama |
| 2. Foster Sarell | Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA) | 6-7 | 311 | Stanford |
| 3. Walker Little | Episcopal (Bellaire, TX) | 6-7 | 315 | Stanford |
| 4. Trey Smith | University School (Jackson, TN) | 6-4 | 310 | Tennessee |
| 5. Isaiah Wilson | Poly Prep (Brooklyn, NY) | 6-7 | 350 | Georgia |
| 6. Wyatt Davis | St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA) | 6-5 | 310 | Ohio State |
| 7. Calvin Ashley | St. John's College HS (Washington, D.C.) | 6-6 | 310 | Auburn |
| 8. Jedrick Wills | Lafayette (Lexington, KY) | 6-5 | 218 | Alabama |
| 9. Austin Jackson | North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ) | 6-6 | 280 | USC |
| 10. Andrew Thomas | Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA) | 6-5 | 335 | Georgia |
| 11. Cesar Ruiz | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | 6-3 | 315 | Michigan |
| 12. Austin Deculus | Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX) | 6-6 | 331 | LSU |
| 13. Josh Myers | Miamisburg (Miamisburg, OH) | 6-6 | 306 | Ohio State |
| 14. Tadarrell Slaton | American Heritage (Plantation, FL) | 6-5 | 360 | Florida |
| 15. Navaghnd Donaldson | Miami Central (Miami, FL) | 6-6 | 335 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 16. Jack Anderson | Frisco (Frisco, TX) | 6-5 | 300 | Texas Tech |
| 17. Robert Hainsey | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | 6-5 | 276 | Notre Dame |
| 18. C.J. Thorpe | Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, PA) | 6-3 | 318 | Penn State |
| 19. Netori Johnson | Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA) | 6-3 | 341 | Georgia |
| 20. Jake Moretti | Pomona (Arvada, CO) | 6-5 | 285 | Colorado |
| 21. Tyrese Robinson | Boyd (McKinney, TX) | 6-4 | 310 | Oklahoma |
| 22. Alijah Vera-Tucker | Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA) | 6-4 | 291 | USC |
| 23. Chuck Filiaga | Aledo (Aledo, TX) | 6-6 | 335 | Michigan |
| 24. Joshua Lugg | North Allegheny (Wexford, PA) | 6-7 | 293 | Notre Dame |
| 25. Micah Clark | St. John Vianney (Holmdel, NJ) | 6-5 | 265 | Rutgers |
| 26. Jonah Melton | Eastern Alamance (Mebane, NC) | 6-4 | 295 | North Carolina |
| 27. Nick Brahms | Navarre (Navarre, FL) | 6-4 | 285 | Auburn |
| 28. Wes Harris | Aledo (Aledo, TX) | 6-4 | 290 | TCU |
| 29. Aaron Banks | El Cerrito (El Cerrito, CA) | 6-7 | 315 | Notre Dame |
| 30. Austin Troxell | Madison Academy (Madison, AL) | 6-7 | 335 | Auburn |

LINEBACKERS

| Player | High School | Ht | Wt | School |
|---------------------------|---|-----|-----|---------------|
| 1. Baron Browning | Kennedale (Kennedale, TX) | 6-2 | 229 | Ohio State |
| 2. Dylan Moses | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | 6-3 | 310 | Alabama |
| 3. Jacob Phillips | East Nashville Magnet (Nashville, TN) | 6-4 | 228 | LSU |
| 4. Anthony Hines | Plano East (Plano, TX) | 6-3 | 222 | Texas A&M |
| 5. Willie Gay | Starkville (Starkville, MS) | 6-2 | 223 | Miss. State |
| 6. Drew Singleton | Paramus Catholic (Paramus, NJ) | 6-2 | 215 | Michigan |
| 7. VanDarius Cowan | Palm Beach Gardens (Palm Beach Gardens, FL) | 6-4 | 226 | Alabama |
| 8. Levi Jones | Westlake (Austin, TX) | 6-3 | 215 | USC |
| 9. Markail Benton | Central (Phenix City, AL) | 6-2 | 237 | Alabama |
| 10. Tadarrian Moultry | Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, AL) | 6-2 | 225 | Auburn |
| 11. Christopher Allen | Southern Lab School (Baton Rouge, LA) | 6-4 | 234 | Alabama |
| 12. Jordan Anthony | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | 6-0 | 220 | Michigan |
| 13. Levi Draper | Collinsville (Collinsville, OK) | 6-4 | 222 | Oklahoma |
| 14. Jaden Hunter | Westlake (Atlanta, GA) | 6-2 | 212 | Georgia |
| 15. Nate McBride | Vidalia Comprehensive (Vidalia, GA) | 6-1 | 223 | Georgia |
| 16. Avery Roberts | Concord (Wilmington, DE) | 6-1 | 220 | Nebraska |
| 17. Leonard Warner | Brookwood (Snellville, GA) | 6-4 | 226 | Florida State |
| 18. Nathan Proctor | Henry E. Lackey (Indian Head, MD) | 6-3 | 200 | Virginia Tech |
| 19. Walter Grant | Cairo (Cairo, GA) | 6-4 | 236 | Georgia |
| 20. Bruce Jordan-Swilling | Brother Martin (New Orleans, LA) | 6-0 | 215 | Georgia Tech |
| 21. Josh Ross | St. Mary's (Orchard Lake, MI) | 6-2 | 221 | Michigan |
| 22. David Adams | Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, PA) | 6-2 | 224 | Notre Dame |
| 23. Tyler Taylor | Lanier (Buford, GA) | 6-2 | 230 | LSU |
| 24. Dylan Rivers | Sherando (Stephens City, VA) | 6-2 | 230 | Virginia Tech |
| 25. Breon Dixon | Grayson (Loganville, GA) | 6-0 | 218 | Ole Miss |
| 26. Ellis Almonce | Benedictine (Richmond, VA) | 6-2 | 233 | Penn State |
| 27. Pete Werner | Cathedral (Mount Vernon, IN) | 6-3 | 220 | Ohio State |
| 28. K.J. Britt | Oxford (Oxford, AL) | 6-0 | 232 | Auburn |
| 29. Tyshon Fogg | Calvert Hall (Towson, MD) | 6-2 | 240 | Rutgers |
| 30. Will Ignott | Buckhorn (New Market, AL) | 6-2 | 230 | Tennessee |

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

| Player | High School | Ht | Wt | School |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|----------------|
| 1. Jaalen Phillips | Redlands East Valley (Redlands, CA) | 6-6 | 253 | UCLA |
| 2. Marvin Wilson | Episcopal (Bellaire, TX) | 6-4 | 329 | Florida State |
| 3. Chase Young | DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD) | 6-5 | 251 | Ohio State |
| 4. Joshua Kaindoh | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | 6-6 | 250 | Florida State |
| 5. Aubrey Solomon | Lee County (Leesburg, GA) | 6-3 | 288 | Michigan |
| 6. LaBryan Ray | James Clemens (Madison, AL) | 6-4 | 260 | Alabama |
| 7. A.J. Epenesa | Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL) | 6-5 | 260 | Iowa |
| 8. K'Lavon Chaisson | North Shore (Houston, TX) | 6-4 | 220 | LSU |
| 9. Jay Tufele | Bingham (South Jordan, UT) | 6-3 | 297 | USC |
| 10. Tyler Shelvin | Notre Dame (Crowley, LA) | 6-3 | 376 | LSU |
| 11. Luiji Vilain | Episcopal (Alexandria, VA) | 6-4 | 242 | Michigan |
| 12. Marlon Tuipulotu | Central (Independence, OR) | 6-2 | 295 | USC |
| 13. Haskell Garrett | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | 6-2 | 288 | Ohio State |
| 14. D.J. Johnson | Luther Burbank (Sacramento, CA) | 6-5 | 240 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 15. Jarez Parks | Sebastian River (Sebastian, FL) | 6-3 | 253 | Alabama |
| 16. Phidarian Mathis | Neville (Monroe, LA) | 6-4 | 287 | Alabama |
| 17. Robert Beal | Peachtree Ridge (Suwanee, GA) | 6-4 | 230 | Georgia |
| 18. Greg Rogers | Arbor View (Las Vegas, NV) | 6-3 | 305 | UCLA |
| 19. Zachary Carter | Hillsborough (Tampa, FL) | 6-5 | 250 | Florida |
| 20. Addison Gumbs | Stellar Prep (Hayward, CA) | 6-4 | 220 | Oklahoma |
| 21. Hunter Echols | Cathedral (Los Angeles, CA) | 6-4 | 231 | USC |
| 22. Ja'Ten Parks | Newberry (Newberry, FL) | 6-3 | 288 | Florida State |
| 23. Malik Herring | Mary Persons (Forsyth, GA) | 6-4 | 265 | Georgia |
| 24. Darnell Ewell | Lake Taylor (Norfolk, VA) | 6-4 | 295 | Notre Dame |
| 25. Justin Foster | Crest (Shelby, NC) | 6-4 | 250 | Clemson |
| 26. Jake Lawler | South Mecklenburg (Charlotte, NC) | 6-4 | 225 | North Carolina |
| 27. Jordan Williams | Frank W. Cox (Virginia Beach, VA) | 6-5 | 260 | Clemson |
| 28. Markaviest Bryant | Crisp County (Cordele, GA) | 6-4 | 226 | Auburn |
| 29. Taqum Graham | Temple (Temple, TX) | 6-3 | 255 | Texas |
| 30. Yetur Matos | Chancellor (Fredericksburg, VA) | 6-5 | 235 | Penn State |

DEFENSIVE BACKS

| Player | High School | Ht | Wt | School |
|-------------------------|--|------|-----|----------------|
| 1. Jeffrey Okudah | South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX) | 6-2 | 190 | Ohio State |
| 2. Shaun Wade | Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL) | 6-1 | 177 | Ohio State |
| 3. JaCoby Stevens | Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN) | 6-1 | 200 | LSU |
| 4. Richard LeCounte III | Liberty County (Hinesville, GA) | 5-11 | 174 | Georgia |
| 5. Darnay Holmes | Calabasas (Calabasas, CA) | 5-10 | 190 | UCLA |
| 6. Stanford Samuels | Charles W. Flanagan (Hollywood, FL) | 6-2 | 175 | Florida State |
| 7. Devon Hunter | Indian River (Chesapeake, VA) | 6-1 | 205 | Virginia Tech |
| 8. Lamont Wade | Clairton (Clairton, PA) | 5-9 | 190 | Penn State |
| 9. DeAngelo Gibbs | Grayson (Loganville, GA) | 6-2 | 204 | Georgia |
| 10. Paris Ford | Steel Valley (Munhall, PA) | 6-1 | 180 | Pittsburgh |
| 11. A.J. Terrell | Westlake (Atlanta, GA) | 6-2 | 180 | Clemson |
| 12. Xavier McKinney | Roswell (Roswell, GA) | 6-1 | 192 | Alabama |
| 13. Isaiah Pryor | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | 6-2 | 195 | Ohio State |
| 14. Bubba Bolden | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | 6-2 | 192 | USC |
| 15. Grant Delpit | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | 6-4 | 181 | LSU |
| 16. Deommodore Lenoir | Salesian (Los Angeles, CA) | 5-11 | 191 | Oregon |
| 17. Jamiest Williams | Grayson (Loganville, GA) | 5-9 | 174 | South Carolina |
| 18. Maleik Gray | LaVergne (LaVergne, TN) | 6-2 | 190 | Tennessee |
| 19. Justin Broiles | John Marshall (Oklahoma City, OK) | 6-0 | 175 | Oklahoma |
| 20. Thomas Graham | Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA) | 5-11 | 175 | Oregon |
| 21. Jaylon Johnson | Central East (Fresno, CA) | 6-1 | 181 | Utah |
| 22. Todd Harris | Plaquemine (Plaquemine, LA) | 6-0 | 180 | LSU |
| 23. Kary Vincent | Memorial (Port Arthur, TX) | 5-11 | 170 | LSU |
| 24. Ambry Thomas | Martin Luther King (Detroit, MI) | 6-0 | 174 | Michigan |
| 25. Cyrus Fagan | Mainland (Daytona Beach, FL) | 6-2 | 182 | Florida State |
| 26. Robert Barnes | Carroll (Southlake, TX) | 6-3 | 194 | Oklahoma |
| 27. Paulson Adebode | Mansfield (Mansfield, TX) | 6-2 | 180 | Stanford |
| 28. Hamsah Nasirildeen | Concord (Concord, NC) | 6-3 | 210 | Florida State |
| 29. Isaiah Pola-Mao | Mountain Pointe (Phoenix, AZ) | 6-4 | 200 | USC |
| 30. Daniel Wright | Boyd Anderson (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | 6-1 | 187 | Alabama |

BY CONFERENCE RECRUITING REPORT

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RANKINGS PROVIDED BY

247COMPOSITE

ACC

| Player | High School (Hometown) | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|---------------------------|---|-----|------|-----|----------------|
| 1. Cam Akers | Clinton (Clinton, MS) | RB | 5-11 | 213 | Florida State |
| 2. Marvin Wilson | Episcopal (Bellaire, TX) | DT | 6-4 | 329 | Florida State |
| 3. Joshua Kaindoh | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | DE | 6-6 | 250 | Florida State |
| 4. Tee Higgins | Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN) | WR | 6-5 | 188 | Clemson |
| 5. Khalen Latorn | Bishop Sullivan (Virginia Beach, VA) | RB | 5-10 | 199 | Florida State |
| 6. Hunter Johnson | Brownsburg (Brownsburg, IN) | QB | 6-2 | 201 | Clemson |
| 7. Stanford Samuels | Charles W. Flanagan (Hollywood, FL) | CB | 6-2 | 175 | Florida State |
| 8. Jeff Thomas | East St. Louis (East St. Louis, IL) | WR | 5-10 | 175 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 9. Devon Hunter | Indian River (Chesapeake, VA) | S | 6-1 | 205 | Virginia Tech |
| 10. D.J. Matthews | Trinity Christian (Jacksonville, FL) | WR | 5-11 | 160 | Florida State |
| 11. Paris Ford | Steel Valley (Munhall, PA) | S | 6-1 | 180 | Pittsburgh |
| 12. A.J. Terrell | Westlake (Atlanta, GA) | CB | 6-2 | 180 | Clemson |
| 13. Navaughn Donaldson | Miami Central (Miami, FL) | OT | 6-6 | 335 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 14. D.J. Johnson | Luther Burbank (Sacramento, CA) | DE | 6-5 | 240 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 15. Cyrus Fagan | Mainland (Daytona Beach, FL) | S | 6-2 | 182 | Florida State |
| 16. Hamsah Nasirildeen | Concord (Concord, NC) | S | 6-3 | 210 | Florida State |
| 17. Amari Rodgers | Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN) | WR | 5-10 | 221 | Clemson |
| 18. Ja'len Parks | Newberry (Newberry, FL) | DT | 6-3 | 288 | Florida State |
| 19. Zaquandre White | North Fort Myers (North Fort Myers, FL) | RB | 6-0 | 210 | Florida State |
| 20. Jonah Melton | Eastern Alamance (Mebane, NC) | OG | 6-4 | 295 | North Carolina |
| 21. Justin Foster | Crest (Shelby, NC) | DE | 6-4 | 250 | Clemson |
| 22. Jake Lawler | South Mecklenburg (Charlotte, NC) | DE | 6-4 | 225 | North Carolina |
| 23. Jordan Williams | Frank W. Cox (Virginia Beach, VA) | DE | 6-5 | 260 | Clemson |
| 24. Leonard Warner | Brookwood (Snellville, GA) | LB | 6-4 | 226 | Florida State |
| 25. Nathan Proctor | Henry E. Lackey (Indian Head, MD) | LB | 6-3 | 200 | Virginia Tech |
| 26. N'Kosi Perry | Vanguard (Ocala, FL) | QB | 6-4 | 176 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 27. LeAnthony Williams | Roswell (Roswell, GA) | CB | 6-0 | 170 | Clemson |
| 28. Travis Etienne | Jennings (Jennings, LA) | RB | 5-11 | 210 | Clemson |
| 29. Bruce Jordan-Swilling | Brother Martin (New Orleans, LA) | LB | 6-0 | 215 | Georgia Tech |
| 30. C.J. Avery | Grenada (Grenada, MS) | S | 6-1 | 196 | Louisville |
| 31. Colin Wilson | Clay (Green Cove Springs, FL) | RB | 6-1 | 220 | Louisville |
| 32. Trajan Bandy | Columbus (Miami, FL) | CB | 5-10 | 180 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 33. A.J. Davis | Lakeland (Lakeland, FL) | RB | 5-11 | 190 | Pittsburgh |
| 34. Matt Bockhorst | St. Xavier (Cincinnati, OH) | OG | 6-5 | 297 | Clemson |
| 35. Kai-Leon Herbert | American Heritage (Plantation, FL) | DT | 6-5 | 284 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 36. Dylan Rivers | Sherando (Stephens City, VA) | LB | 6-2 | 230 | Virginia Tech |
| 37. DeeJay Davis | Gynn Academy (Brunswick, GA) | ATH | 5-11 | 191 | Miami (Fla.) |
| 38. Chase Price | Grayson (Loganville, GA) | QB | 6-2 | 207 | Clemson |
| 39. Russ Yeast | Center Grove (Greenwood, IN) | CB | 5-11 | 178 | Louisville |
| 40. Jonathan Garvin | Lake Worth (Lake Worth, FL) | DE | 6-4 | 222 | Miami (Fla.) |

BIG TEN

| Player | High School (Hometown) | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|---------------------------|--|-----|------|-----|------------|
| 1. Jeffrey Okudah | South Grand Prairie (Grand Prairie, TX) | CB | 6-2 | 190 | Ohio State |
| 2. Chase Young | DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD) | DE | 6-5 | 251 | Ohio State |
| 3. Baron Browning | Kennedale (Kennedale, TX) | LB | 6-2 | 229 | Ohio State |
| 4. Donovan Peoples-Jones | Cass Technical (Detroit, MI) | WR | 6-2 | 193 | Michigan |
| 5. Shaun Wade | Trinity Christian Acad. (Jacksonville, FL) | CB | 6-1 | 177 | Ohio State |
| 6. Wyatt Davis | St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA) | OG | 6-5 | 310 | Ohio State |
| 7. Aubrey Solomon | Lee County (Leesburg, GA) | DT | 6-3 | 288 | Michigan |
| 8. A.J. Epenesa | Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL) | DE | 6-5 | 260 | Iowa |
| 9. Trevon Grimes | St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | WR | 6-3 | 202 | Ohio State |
| 10. J.K. Dobbins | La Grange (La Grange, TX) | RB | 5-10 | 199 | Ohio State |
| 11. Cesar Ruiz | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | C | 6-3 | 315 | Michigan |
| 12. Lamont Wade | Clairston (Clairston, PA) | CB | 5-9 | 190 | Penn State |
| 13. Tyjon Lindsey | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | WR | 5-9 | 161 | Nebraska |
| 14. Josh Myers | Miamisburg (Miamisburg, OH) | OG | 6-6 | 306 | Ohio State |
| 15. Luiji Vilain | Episcopal (Alexandria, VA) | DE | 6-4 | 242 | Michigan |
| 16. Tate Martell | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | QB | 5-11 | 203 | Ohio State |
| 17. Isaiah Pryor | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | S | 6-2 | 195 | Ohio State |
| 18. Haskell Garrett | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | DT | 6-2 | 288 | Ohio State |
| 19. Drew Singleton | Paramus Catholic (Paramus, NJ) | LB | 6-2 | 215 | Michigan |
| 20. C.J. Thorpe | Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, PA) | OG | 6-3 | 318 | Penn State |
| 21. Ambry Thomas | Martin Luther King (Detroit, MI) | CB | 6-0 | 174 | Michigan |
| 22. Anthony McFarland Jr. | DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD) | RB | 5-9 | 203 | Maryland |
| 23. Jordan Anthony | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | LB | 6-0 | 220 | Michigan |
| 24. Chuck Filiaga | Aledo (Aledo, TX) | OT | 6-6 | 335 | Michigan |
| 25. Tarik Black | Cheshire Academy (Cheshire, CT) | WR | 6-4 | 208 | Michigan |
| 26. Dylan McCaffrey | Valor Christian (Highland Ranch, CO) | QB | 6-5 | 196 | Michigan |
| 27. Brendon White | Olentangy Liberty (Powell, OH) | ATH | 6-2 | 200 | Ohio State |
| 28. Micah Clark | St. John Vianney (Holmdel, NJ) | OT | 6-5 | 265 | Rutgers |
| 29. Nico Collins | Clay-Chalkville (Pinson, AL) | WR | 6-5 | 195 | Michigan |
| 30. Elijah Blades | John Muir (Pasadena, CA) | CB | 6-2 | 170 | Nebraska |
| 31. Oliver Martin | West Senior (Iowa City, IA) | WR | 6-1 | 188 | Michigan |
| 32. Avery Roberts | Concord (Wilmington, DE) | LB | 6-1 | 220 | Nebraska |
| 33. Deon Jones | Potomac (Oxon Hill, MD) | CB | 6-1 | 180 | Maryland |
| 34. Amir Riep | Colerain (Cincinnati, OH) | CB | 5-11 | 185 | Ohio State |
| 35. Jaylen Harris | Cleveland Heights (Cleveland, OH) | WR | 6-5 | 210 | Ohio State |
| 36. Sean Clifford | St. Xavier (Cincinnati, OH) | QB | 6-2 | 210 | Penn State |
| 37. Markese Bell | Bridgeton (Bridgeton, NJ) | ATH | 6-3 | 194 | Maryland |
| 38. Marcus Williams | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | CB | 5-9 | 180 | Ohio State |
| 39. Tristan Gebbia | Calabasas (Calabasas, CA) | QB | 6-3 | 180 | Nebraska |
| 40. Yetur Matus | Chancellor (Fredericksburg, VA) | DE | 6-5 | 235 | Penn State |

BIG 12

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----|------|-----|----------------|
| 1. Jack Anderson | Frisco (Frisco, TX) | OG | 6-5 | 300 | Texas Tech |
| 2. Justin Broiles | John Marshall (Oklahoma City, OK) | CB | 6-0 | 175 | Oklahoma |
| 3. Jalen Reagor | Waxahachie (Waxahachie, TX) | WR | 5-11 | 195 | TCU |
| 4. Robert Barnes | Carroll (Southlake, TX) | S | 6-3 | 194 | Oklahoma |
| 5. Tyrese Robinson | Boyd (McKinney, TX) | OG | 6-4 | 310 | Oklahoma |
| 6. Tylan Wallace | South Hills (Fort Worth, TX) | WR | 6-0 | 179 | Oklahoma State |
| 7. Sam Ehlinger | Westlake (Austin, TX) | QB | 6-2 | 215 | Texas |
| 8. Levi Draper | Collinsville (Collinsville, OK) | LB | 6-4 | 222 | Oklahoma |
| 9. Addison Gumbs | Stellar Prep (Hayward, CA) | DE | 6-4 | 220 | Oklahoma |
| 10. Tre Brown | Union (Tulsa, OK) | CB | 5-11 | 178 | Oklahoma |
| 11. Damien Miller | John Tyler (Tyler, TX) | WR | 6-1 | 193 | Texas |
| 12. CeeDee Lamb | Foster (Richmond, TX) | WR | 6-3 | 172 | Oklahoma |
| 13. Tioneil Carter | Langham Creek (Houston, TX) | RB | 5-11 | 197 | Texas |
| 14. Omar Manning | Lancaster (Lancaster, TX) | WR | 6-2 | 214 | TCU |
| 15. Wes Harris | Aledo (Aledo, TX) | OG | 6-4 | 290 | TCU |
| 16. Charleston Rambo | Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX) | WR | 6-2 | 170 | Oklahoma |
| 17. Chris Robison | Horn (Mesquite, TX) | QB | 6-2 | 192 | Oklahoma |
| 18. Trey Sermon | Sprayberry (Marietta, GA) | RB | 6-1 | 215 | Oklahoma |
| 19. Shawn Robinson | DeSoto (DeSoto, TX) | QB | 6-2 | 215 | TCU |
| 20. Taquan Graham | Temple (Temple, TX) | DE | 6-3 | 255 | Texas |

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|-----------------------|---|-----|------|-----|----------------|
| 21. Kennedy Brooks | Mansfield (Mansfield, TX) | RB | 6-0 | 197 | Oklahoma |
| 22. Grant Calcatera | Santa Margarita Catholic (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA) | TE | 6-4 | 207 | Oklahoma |
| 23. Shamond Greenwood | Lakeview Centennial (Garland, TX) | WR | 6-3 | 195 | Oklahoma State |
| 24. Montrell Estell | Hooks (Hooks, TX) | ATH | 6-2 | 180 | Texas |
| 25. Marquis Hayes | Pattonville (Maryland Heights, MO) | OG | 6-6 | 335 | Oklahoma |
| 26. Adrian Ealy | East Ascension (Gonzales, LA) | OT | 6-7 | 300 | Oklahoma |
| 27. Ryan Jones | Mallard Creek (Charlotte, NC) | ATH | 6-2 | 219 | Oklahoma |
| 28. Isaiah Thomas | Memorial (Tulsa, OK) | DE | 6-5 | 230 | Oklahoma |
| 29. Creed Humphrey | Shawnee (Shawnee, OK) | C | 6-4 | 301 | Oklahoma |
| 30. Josh Thompson | Nacogdoches (Nacogdoches, TX) | CB | 6-0 | 182 | Texas |
| 31. Xavier Newman | DeSoto (DeSoto, TX) | OG | 6-3 | 272 | Baylor |
| 32. Gavin Holmes | Northwest (Justin, TX) | WR | 5-11 | 178 | Baylor |
| 33. Kenneth Murray | Elkins (Missouri City, TX) | LB | 6-3 | 225 | Oklahoma |
| 34. R.J. Sneed | Cy Ranch (Cypress, TX) | WR | 6-2 | 180 | Baylor |
| 35. Corey Bethley | Katy (Katy, TX) | DT | 6-2 | 302 | TCU |
| 36. Trestan Ebner | Henderson (Henderson, TX) | ATH | 6-0 | 188 | Baylor |
| 37. Derrek Pitts | South Charleston (Charleston, WV) | ATH | 6-1 | 174 | West Virginia |
| 38. Daniel Green | Madison (Portland, OR) | LB | 6-3 | 230 | Kansas State |
| 39. Reese Leitao | Jenks (Jenks, OK) | TE | 6-4 | 234 | Texas |
| 40. Johnathan Lovett | Cherokee (Marlton, NJ) | ATH | 6-1 | 194 | Baylor |

PAC-12

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|------------------------|---|-----|------|-----|---------------|
| 1. Jaelan Phillips | Redlands East Valley (Redlands, CA) | DE | 6-6 | 253 | UCLA |
| 2. Foster Sarell | Graham-Kapowsin (Graham, WA) | OT | 6-7 | 311 | Stanford |
| 3. Walker Little | Episcopal (Bellaire, TX) | OT | 6-7 | 315 | Stanford |
| 4. Davis Mills | Greater Atlanta Christian (Norcross, GA) | QB | 6-3 | 19 | Stanford |
| 5. Stephen Carr | Summit (Fontana, CA) | RB | 6-0 | 202 | USC |
| 6. Darnay Holmes | Calabasas (Calabasas, CA) | CB | 5-10 | 190 | UCLA |
| 7. Joseph Lewis | Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA) | WR | 6-2 | 204 | USC |
| 8. Austin Jackson | North Canyon (Phoenix, AZ) | OT | 6-6 | 280 | USC |
| 9. Colby Parkinson | Oaks Christian (Westlake Village, CA) | TE | 6-7 | 228 | Stanford |
| 10. Jay Tufele | Bingham (South Jordan, UT) | DT | 6-3 | 297 | USC |
| 11. Marlon Tuipulotu | Central (Independence, OR) | DT | 6-2 | 295 | USC |
| 12. Bubba Bolden | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | S | 6-2 | 192 | USC |
| 13. Deonmodore Lenoir | Salesian (Los Angeles, CA) | CB | 5-11 | 191 | Oregon |
| 14. Thomas Graham | Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA) | CB | 5-11 | 175 | Oregon |
| 15. Jaylon Johnson | Central East (Fresno, CA) | CB | 6-1 | 181 | Utah |
| 16. Levi Jones | Westlake (Austin, TX) | LB | 6-3 | 215 | USC |
| 17. Jake Moretti | Pomona (Arvada, CO) | OT | 6-5 | 285 | Colorado |
| 18. Greg Johnson | Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA) | ATH | 5-10 | 185 | USC |
| 19. Jack Sears | San Clemente (San Clemente, CA) | QB | 6-3 | 200 | USC |
| 20. Paulson Adebayo | Mansfield (Mansfield, TX) | CB | 6-2 | 180 | Stanford |
| 21. Salvon Ahmed | Juanita (Kirkland, WA) | ATH | 6-0 | 185 | Washington |
| 22. Alijah Vera-Jucker | Bishop O'Dowd (Oakland, CA) | OT | 6-4 | 291 | USC |
| 23. Isaiah Pola-Mao | Mountain Pointe (Phoenix, AZ) | S | 6-4 | 200 | USC |
| 24. Greg Rogers | Arbor View (Las Vegas, NV) | DT | 6-3 | 305 | UCLA |
| 25. Hunter Echols | Cathedral (Los Angeles, CA) | DE | 6-4 | 231 | USC |
| 26. Osisir St. Brown | Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA) | WR | 6-2 | 181 | Stanford |
| 27. Eno Benjamin | Wylie East (Wylie, TX) | RB | 5-10 | 204 | Arizona State |
| 28. Josh Falo | Inderkum (Sacramento, CA) | TE | 6-5 | 235 | USC |
| 29. Alex Perry | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | CB | 5-11 | 178 | Arizona State |
| 30. Hunter Bryant | Eastside Catholic (Sammamish, WA) | TE | 6-3 | 238 | Washington |
| 31. Connor Wedington | Sumner (Sumner, WA) | ATH | 6-0 | 189 | Stanford |
| 32. Elijah Molden | West Linn (West Linn, OR) | CB | 5-11 | 185 | Washington |
| 33. Jaylon Redd | Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA) | CB | 5-9 | 180 | Oregon |
| 34. Henry Bainivalu | Skyline (Seattle, WA) | OT | 6-6 | 290 | Washington |
| 35. Stone Heimuli-Lund | Brighton (Cottonwood Heights, UT) | RB | 6-1 | 237 | Stanford |
| 36. Brett Neilson | Santa Margarita Catholic (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA) | OC | 6-2 | 280 | USC |
| 37. Nathan Tilford | Colony (Ontario, CA) | RB | 6-2 | 190 | Arizona |
| 38. Ryan Johnson | St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile, AL) | DE | 6-3 | 253 | Stanford |
| 39. Tyler Johnson | Highland (Gilbert, AZ) | DE | 6-4 | 245 | Arizona State |
| 40. Ty Jones | Provo (Provo, UT) | WR | 6-4 | 195 | Washington |

AMERICAN

| Player | High School (Hometown) | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|-------------------------|--|-----|------|-----|------------|
| 1. Cordarian Richardson | Trezevant (Memphis, TN) | RB | 5-11 | 220 | UCF |
| 2. Obinna Eze | Davidson Academy (Nashville, TN) | OT | 6-7 | 279 | Memphis |
| 3. R.J. Potts | Fishers (Fishers, IN) | S | 6-2 | 199 | Cincinnati |
| 4. Bryan Jones | Madison Prep Academy (Baton Rouge, LA) | DE | 6-5 | 240 | Houston |
| 5. Sam Crawford | Rockwall (Rockwall, TX) | WR | 6-0 | 188 | Tulsa |
| 6. Nayton Culpepper | Miami Carol City (Miami Gardens, FL) | S | 6-0 | 175 | USF |
| 7. Michael Warren | Central Catholic (Toledo, OH) | RB | 5-11 | 200 | Cincinnati |
| 8. Nick Robinson | Putnam City West (Oklahoma City, OK) | WR | 6-3 | 279 | Memphis |
| 9. Emmanuel Greene | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | WR | 5-10 | 171 | UCF |
| 10. Terrell Carter | Stratford (Nashville, TN) | CB | 5-10 | 180 | Memphis |

MAC

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|----------------------|--|-----|------|-----|-------------------|
| 1. Rodney Scott | Miami Southridge (Miami, FL) | WR | 6-0 | 175 | Buffalo |
| 2. Kedonis Haslem | St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | OG | 6-3 | 290 | Toledo |
| 3. Keegan Cossou | Greenville (Greenville, MI) | TE | 6-5 | 225 | Central Michigan |
| 4. Jairus Grissom | River Rouge (River Rouge, MI) | QB | 6-2 | 204 | Eastern Michigan |
| 5. Khalil Newton | Stephenson (Stone Mountain, GA) | WR | 6-2 | 175 | Ball State |
| 6. Josh Maize | Deerfield (Deerfield, IL) | DE | 6-5 | 230 | Miami (Ohio) |
| 7. Isaac Hawn | St. Charles North (St. Charles, IL) | OT | 6-7 | 278 | Northern Illinois |
| 8. Mitch Lewis | Naperville North (Naperville, IL) | TE | 6-6 | 220 | Miami (Ohio) |
| 9. Justin Gibbs | Grovetown (Grovetown, GA) | WR | 6-2 | 200 | Ball State |
| 10. Aapri Washington | Mountain Island (Mount Holly, NC) | CB | 5-10 | 166 | Buffalo |

SUN BELT

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----|------|-----|-------------------|
| 1. Kendrick Haynes | Murphy (Mobile, AL) | LB | 6-1 | 224 | South Alabama |
| 2. Kieston Roach | North Shore (Houston, TX) | CB | 5-11 | 170 | Texas State |
| 3. Corey Staughter | Neville (Monroe, LA) | CB | 5-11 | 165 | ULM |
| 4. Chase Rogers | St. Stanislaus (Bay St. Louis, MS) | TE | 6-3 | 238 | UL Lafayette |
| 5. Jaylon Mascorro | Refugio (Refugio, TX) | ATH | 6-2 | 205 | New Mexico State |
| 6. A.J. DeShazor | Lake Gibson (Lakeland, FL) | S | 6-0 | 185 | South Alabama |
| 7. Dwayne Fisher | John Ehret (Marrero, LA) | OT | 6-5 | 300 | Arkansas State |
| 8. Lavante Epton | Washington School (Greenville, MS) | OG | 6-3 | 315 | UL Lafayette |
| 9. Malik Williams | Chester (Chester, SC) | ATH | 5-11 | 175 | Appalachian State |
| 10. Tay Pringle | Brookland-Cayce (Cayce, SC) | DT | 6-2 | 280 | Coastal Carolina |



SEC

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|-------------------------|---|-----|------|-----|-------------------|
| 1. Najee Harris | Antioch (Antioch, CA) | RB | 6-3 | 226 | Alabama |
| 2. Alex Leatherwood | Washington (Pensacola, FL) | OT | 6-6 | 327 | Alabama |
| 3. Dylan Moses | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | LB | 6-3 | 310 | Alabama |
| 4. Trey Smith | University School (Jackson, TN) | OT | 6-4 | 31 | Tennessee |
| 5. Isaiah Wilson | Poly Prep (Brooklyn, NY) | OT | 6-7 | 350 | Georgia |
| 6. JaCoby Stevens | Oakland (Murfreesboro, TN) | S | 6-1 | 200 | LSU |
| 7. Jerry Jeudy | Deerfield Beach (Deerfield Beach, FL) | WR | 6-1 | 177 | Alabama |
| 8. Richard LeCounte III | Liberty County (Hinesboro, GA) | S | 5-11 | 174 | Georgia |
| 9. LaBryan Ray | James Clemens (Madison, AL) | DE | 6-4 | 260 | Alabama |
| 10. Calvin Ashley | St. John's College HS (Washington, D.C.) | OT | 6-6 | 310 | Auburn |
| 11. Tua Tagovailoa | St. Louis (Honolulu, HI) | QB | 6-1 | 212 | Alabama |
| 12. D'Andre Swift | St. Joseph's (Philadelphia, PA) | RB | 5-9 | 212 | Georgia |
| 13. Jedrick Wills | Lafayette (Lexington, KY) | OT | 6-5 | 218 | Alabama |
| 14. K'Lavon Chaisson | North Shore (Houston, TX) | DE | 6-4 | 220 | LSU |
| 15. Andrew Thomas | Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA) | OT | 6-5 | 335 | Georgia |
| 16. Jake Fromm | Houston County (Warner Robins, GA) | QB | 6-1 | 229 | Georgia |
| 17. Austin Deculus | Cy-Fair (Cypress, TX) | OT | 6-6 | 331 | LSU |
| 18. DeAngelo Gibbs | Grayson (Loganville, GA) | S | 6-2 | 204 | Georgia |
| 19. Tyler Shelvin | Notre Dame (Crowley, LA) | DT | 6-3 | 376 | LSU |
| 20. Xavier McKinney | Roswell (Roswell, GA) | S | 6-1 | 192 | Alabama |
| 21. Jacob Phillips | East Nashville Magnet (Nashville, TN) | LB | 6-4 | 228 | LSU |
| 22. Anthony Hines | Plano East (Plano, TX) | LB | 6-3 | 222 | Texas A&M |
| 23. Devonta Smith | Amite (Amite, LA) | WR | 6-1 | 160 | Alabama |
| 24. Grant Delpit | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | S | 6-4 | 181 | LSU |
| 25. Ty Chandler | MBA (Nashville, TN) | RB | 5-11 | 187 | Tennessee |
| 26. Tadarrell Stalon | American Heritage (Plantation, FL) | OG | 6-5 | 360 | Florida |
| 27. Willie Gay | Starkville (Starkville, MS) | LB | 6-2 | 223 | Mississippi State |
| 28. Jamyest Williams | Grayson (Loganville, GA) | CB | 5-9 | 174 | South Carolina |
| 29. Jhamon Ausbon | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | WR | 6-3 | 217 | Texas A&M |
| 30. Henry Ruggs III | Robert E. Lee (Montgomery, AL) | WR | 6-0 | 175 | Alabama |
| 31. Maleik Gray | LaVergne (LaVergne, TN) | S | 6-2 | 190 | Tennessee |
| 32. VanDarius Cowan | Palm Beach Gardens (Palm Beach Gardens, FL) | LB | 6-4 | 226 | Alabama |
| 33. Todd Harris | Plaquemine (Plaquemine, LA) | S | 6-0 | 180 | LSU |
| 34. Tyrell Shavers | Lewisville (Lewisville, TX) | WR | 6-6 | 196 | Alabama |
| 35. Netori Johnson | Cedar Grove (Ellenwood, GA) | OG | 6-3 | 341 | Georgia |
| 36. Kary Vincent | Memorial (Port Arthur, TX) | CB | 5-11 | 170 | LSU |
| 37. Jarez Parks | Sebastian River (Sebastian, FL) | DE | 6-3 | 253 | Alabama |
| 38. Markail Benton | Central (Phenix City, AL) | LB | 6-2 | 237 | Alabama |
| 39. Phidarian Mathis | Neville (Monroe, LA) | DT | 6-4 | 287 | Alabama |
| 40. Tadarrian Moultry | Jackson-Olin (Birmingham, AL) | LB | 6-2 | 225 | Auburn |

C-USA

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-----|------|-----|----------------|
| 1. Thomas Johnston | Spanish Fort (Spanish Fort, AL) | LB | 6-2 | 215 | UAB |
| 2. Darius Hodge | Wake Forest (Wake Forest, NC) | LB | 6-2 | 217 | Marshall |
| 3. Ahman Ross | The Bolles School (Jacksonville, FL) | S | 5-11 | 195 | FAU |
| 4. Jaiden Cole | Neville (Monroe, LA) | ATH | 6-1 | 195 | Louisiana Tech |
| 5. Emanuel Dabney | Callaway (Jackson, MS) | CB | 6-1 | 170 | Southern Miss |
| 6. Paul Gainer | Gautier (Gautier, MS) | OG | 6-3 | 275 | Southern Miss |
| 7. Jaylond Adams | Minor (Adamsville, AL) | RB | 5-10 | 170 | Southern Miss |
| 8. Dorian Hall | South Broward (Hollywood, FL) | ATH | 6-4 | 200 | FIU |
| 9. Samuel Barnes | George Ranch (Richmond, TX) | CB | 6-1 | 194 | UTSA |
| 10. Cody Bowes | Miami Southridge (Miami, FL) | OG | 6-4 | 280 | FIU |

MOUNTAIN WEST

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt | School |
|---------------------|---|-----|------|-----|-----------------|
| 1. Jermani Brown | Midlothian (Midlothian, VA) | ATH | 5-11 | 175 | Boise State |
| 2. Kaegon Williams | Cedar Hill (Cedar Hill, TX) | RB | 5-9 | 190 | San Diego State |
| 3. Octavius EvansW | Center (Center, TX) | WR | 6-2 | 195 | Boise State |
| 4. Chase Cord | Sunrise Mountain (Peoria, AZ) | QB | 6-3 | 195 | Boise State |
| 5. Cartrell Thomas | Lancaster (Lancaster, TX) | WR | 5-9 | 155 | Boise State |
| 6. Christian Cumber | Mullen (Denver, CO) | CB | 6-0 | 190 | Colorado State |
| 7. Marcus McElroy | Mullen (Denver, CO) | RB | 5-11 | 202 | Colorado State |
| 8. Darren Hall | Rancho Cucamonga (Rancho Cucamonga, CA) | CB | 6-0 | 165 | San Diego State |
| 9. Zeke Noa | Helix (La Mesa, CA) | LB | 5-11 | 219 | Boise State |
| 10. Aissa Kelemete | Highland (Pocatello, ID) | DE | 6-4 | 225 | Boise State |

TEAM RANKINGS RECRUITING REPORT

presented by

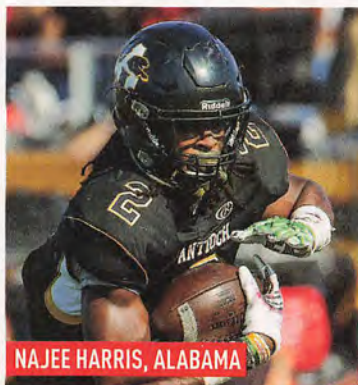
Wrangler

RANKINGS PROVIDED BY

247COMPOSITE

TOP 50 CLASSES

1. ALABAMA
2. OHIO STATE
3. GEORGIA
4. USC
5. MICHIGAN
6. FLORIDA STATE
7. LSU
8. OKLAHOMA
9. AUBURN
10. NOTRE DAME
11. FLORIDA
12. TEXAS A&M
13. MIAMI
14. STANFORD
15. PENN STATE
16. CLEMSON
17. TENNESSEE
18. MARYLAND
19. OREGON
20. UCLA
21. SOUTH CAROLINA
22. WASHINGTON
23. NEBRASKA
24. MISSISSIPPI STATE
25. VIRGINIA TECH
26. TEXAS
27. NORTH CAROLINA
28. ARKANSAS
29. KENTUCKY
30. OLE MISS
31. TCU
32. LOUISVILLE
33. UTAH
34. MICHIGAN STATE
35. COLORADO
36. PITT
37. ARIZONA STATE
38. OKLAHOMA STATE
39. WISCONSIN
40. BAYLOR
41. IOWA
42. RUTGERS
43. ARIZONA
44. WASHINGTON STATE
45. ILLINOIS
46. GEORGIA TECH
47. MISSOURI
48. DUKE
49. TEXAS TECH
50. NORTHWESTERN



NAJEE HARRIS, ALABAMA



JEFFREY OKUDAH, OHIO STATE

TEAM RANKINGS

ACC

1. Florida State
2. Miami
3. Clemson
4. Virginia Tech
5. North Carolina
6. Louisville
7. Pitt
8. Georgia Tech
9. Duke
10. NC State
11. Syracuse
12. Virginia
13. Wake Forest
14. Boston College

BIG 12

1. Oklahoma
2. Texas
3. TCU
4. Oklahoma State
5. Baylor
6. Texas Tech
7. Iowa State
8. West Virginia
9. Kansas State
10. Kansas

BIG TEN

1. Ohio State
2. Michigan
3. Penn State
4. Maryland
5. Nebraska
6. Michigan State
7. Wisconsin
8. Iowa
9. Rutgers
10. Illinois
11. Northwestern
12. Minnesota
13. Indiana
14. Purdue

PAC-12

1. USC
2. Stanford
3. Oregon
4. UCLA
5. Washington
6. Utah
7. Colorado
8. Arizona State
9. Arizona
10. Washington State
11. Oregon State
12. Cal

SEC

1. Alabama
2. Georgia
3. LSU
4. Auburn
5. Florida
6. Texas A&M
7. Tennessee
8. South Carolina
9. Mississippi State
10. Arkansas
11. Kentucky
12. Ole Miss
13. Missouri
14. Vanderbilt

AMERICAN

1. UCF
2. Memphis
3. Cincinnati
4. Houston
5. USF
6. East Carolina
7. SMU
8. Navy
9. Tulsa
10. Connecticut
11. Tulane
12. Temple

C-USA

1. Florida Atlantic
2. Southern Miss
3. UTSA
4. FIU
5. Western Kentucky
6. Marshall
7. Middle Tennessee
8. Louisiana Tech
9. Charlotte
10. UAB
11. North Texas
12. Rice
13. Old Dominion
14. UTEP

MAC

1. Toledo
2. Bowling Green
3. Western Michigan
4. Ball State
5. Miami
6. Central Michigan
7. Ohio
8. Northern Illinois
9. Buffalo
10. Eastern Michigan
11. Kent State
12. Akron

MOUNTAIN WEST

1. Boise State
2. Colorado State
3. San Diego State
4. Fresno State
5. Hawaii
6. Nevada
7. Air Force
8. San Jose State
9. Wyoming
10. Utah State
11. New Mexico
12. UNLV

SUN BELT

1. Texas State
2. Troy
3. Louisiana-Monroe
4. Georgia State
5. Georgia Southern
6. Appalachian State
7. Arkansas State
8. Louisiana
9. South Alabama
10. Coastal Carolina
11. New Mexico State
12. Idaho



AUSTIN JACKSON, USC

TOP 100 RISING SENIOR CLASS OF 2018

presented by

Wrangler

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt |
|------------------------------|---|-----|------|-----|
| 1. Trevor Lawrence | Cartersville (Cartersville, GA) | QB | 6-6 | 196 |
| 2. Xavier Thomas | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | DE | 6-3 | 263 |
| 3. Micah Parson | Harrisburg (Harrisburg, PA) | DE | 6-3 | 235 |
| 4. Zamir White | Scotland County (Laurinburg, NC) | RB | 6-1 | 220 |
| 5. Patrick Surtain Jr. | American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | CB | 6-2 | 181 |
| 6. Jamaree Salyer | Pace Academy (Atlanta, GA) | OG | 6-4 | 327 |
| 7. Jackson Carman | Fairfield (Fairfield, OH) | OT | 6-6 | 290 |
| 8. Matt Corral | Long Beach Poly (Long Beach, CA) | QB | 6-2 | 196 |
| 9. Jalen Hall | Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA) | WR | 6-4 | 192 |
| 10. Brey Walker | Southmoore (Moore, OK) | OT | 6-7 | 320 |
| 11. B.J. Foster | Angleton (Angleton, TX) | S | 6-1 | 188 |
| 12. Palaie Gaoteote | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | LB | 6-2 | 235 |
| 13. Cade Mays | Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN) | OT | 6-6 | 321 |
| 14. Taron Vincent | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | DT | 6-2 | 285 |
| 15. Terrace Marshall | Parkway (Bossier City, LA) | WR | 6-3 | 192 |
| 16. Anthony Cook | Lamar (Houston, TX) | CB | 6-1 | 168 |
| 17. Lorenzo Lingard | University (Orange City, FL) | RB | 6-0 | 190 |
| 18. Tyreke Johnson | Trinity Christian Academy (Jacksonville, FL) | S | 6-1 | 191 |
| 19. Amon-Ra St. Brown | Mater Dei (Anaheim, CA) | WR | 6-0 | 191 |
| 20. K.J. Henry | West Forsyth (Clemmons, NC) | DE | 6-6 | 235 |
| 21. Teradja Mitchell | Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA) | LB | 6-2 | 232 |
| 22. James Cook | Miami Central (Miami, FL) | RB | 6-0 | 181 |
| 23. Jacob Sirmon | Bothell (Bothell, WA) | QB | 6-4 | 218 |
| 24. Jaiden Woodbey | St. John Bosco (Fontana, CA) | S | 6-1 | 209 |
| 25. Anthony Lytton | Dr. Henry Wise (Upper Marlboro, MD) | CB | 5-11 | 170 |
| 26. Ricky Slade | C. D. Hylton (Woodbridge, VA) | RB | 5-9 | 195 |
| 27. Emory Jones | Heard County (Franklin, GA) | QB | 6-3 | 193 |
| 28. Isaac Taylor-Stuart | St. Augustine (San Diego, CA) | CB | 6-2 | 187 |
| 29. Phil Jurkovec | Pine-Richland (Gibsonia, PA) | CB | 6-5 | 190 |
| 30. Justyn Ross | Central (Phenix City, AL) | WR | 6-3 | 185 |
| 31. Justin Fields | Harrison (Kennesaw, GA) | QB | 6-3 | 221 |
| 32. T.J. Pledger | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | RB | 5-8 | 190 |
| 33. Jaalen Gill | Westerville South (Westerville, OH) | RB | 6-1 | 182 |
| 34. Jalen Preson | Manvel (Manvel, TX) | WR | 6-2 | 212 |
| 35. Brendan Bradley-Hiles | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | CB | 5-10 | 183 |
| 36. Kelvin Joseph | Scotlandville Magnet (Baton Rouge, LA) | CB | 6-2 | 191 |
| 37. Max Wright | Taylor (Katy, TX) | DE | 6-4 | 270 |
| 38. Justin Watkins | Vanguard (Ocala, FL) | WR | 5-11 | 172 |
| 39. Brian Hightower | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | WR | 6-3 | 202 |
| 40. Tyler Friday | Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, NJ) | DT | 6-3 | 260 |
| 41. Brennan Eagles | Alief Taylor (Houston, TX) | WR | 6-4 | 214 |
| 42. Caden Sterns | Steele (Cibola, TX) | S | 6-1 | 192 |
| 43. Trey Hill | Houston County (Warner Robins, GA) | OG | 6-4 | 325 |
| 44. Matthew Jones | Erasmus Hall (New York City, NY) | DT | 6-4 | 305 |
| 45. Greg Emerson | North Side (Jackson, TN) | DE | 6-3 | 296 |
| 46. Houston Griffith | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | CB | 6-1 | 192 |
| 47. Kamryn Babb | Christian Brothers College (St. Louis, MO) | WR | 6-1 | 189 |
| 48. Jacob Copeland | Escambia (Pensacola, FL) | WR | 6-0 | 192 |
| 49. J.J. Peterson | Colquitt County (Moultrie, GA) | LB | 6-2 | 210 |
| 50. Dorian Thompson-Robinson | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | QB | 6-2 | 195 |
| 51. Derrik Allen | Lassiter (Marietta, GA) | S | 6-1 | 205 |
| 52. Austin Fontaine | DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, MD) | DT | 6-2 | 312 |
| 53. Josh Jobe | Columbus (Miami, FL) | CB | 6-1 | 180 |
| 54. Brenton Cox | Stockbridge (Stockbridge, GA) | DE | 6-4 | 235 |
| 55. Max Wray | Franklin (Franklin, TN) | OT | 6-7 | 289 |



TREVOR LAWRENCE

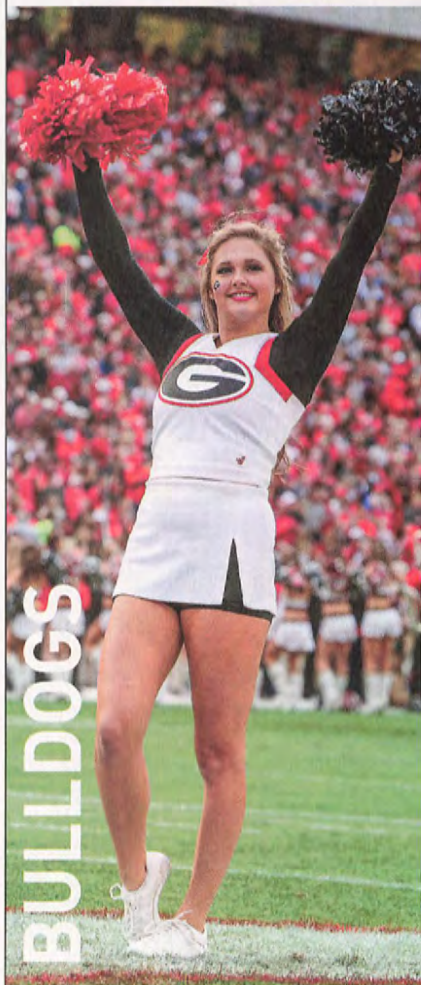


TYSON CAMPBELL

| Player | High School | Pos | Ht | Wt |
|--------------------------|--|-----|------|-----|
| 56. Tyson Campbell | American Heritage (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | CB | 6-3 | 180 |
| 57. Nicholas Petit-Frere | Berkeley Prep (Tampa, FL) | OT | 6-6 | 260 |
| 58. Olajiah Griffin | Mission Viejo (Mission Viejo, CA) | CB | 6-0 | 170 |
| 59. Zack Kuntz | Camp Hill (Camp Hill, PA) | TE | 6-8 | 215 |
| 60. Solomon Tuliaupupu | Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA) | LB | 6-3 | 230 |
| 61. Richard Gouraige | Cambridge Christian School (Tampa, FL) | OT | 6-5 | 271 |
| 62. Isheem Young | Imhotep Institute (Philadelphia, PA) | S | 5-11 | 201 |
| 63. Brian Sneed | Armwood (Seffner, FL) | RB | 5-11 | 200 |
| 64. Rick Sandighe | Concord (Concord, NC) | DT | 6-5 | 273 |
| 65. P.J. Mustipher | McDonogh School (Owings Mills, MD) | DT | 6-6 | 285 |
| 66. Jahan Dotson | The Peddle School (Hightstown, NJ) | WR | 6-0 | 160 |
| 67. Willaim Barnes | Apopka (Apopka, FL) | OT | 6-4 | 312 |
| 68. Marquis Spiker | Murrieta Valley (Murrieta, CA) | WR | 6-3 | 175 |
| 69. Jeremy Ruckert | Lindenhurst (Lindenhurst, NY) | TE | 6-6 | 230 |
| 70. Raymond Scott | Narbonne (Harbor City, CA) | LB | 6-2 | 220 |
| 71. Josh Proctor | Owasso (Owasso, OK) | S | 6-2 | 190 |
| 72. Artur Sitkowski | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | QB | 6-5 | 215 |
| 73. Michael Thompson | Parkway North (St. Louis, MO) | DT | 6-4 | 291 |
| 74. Jalen Green | Heights (Houston, TX) | CB | 6-1 | 171 |
| 75. Al Blades Jr. | St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | CB | 6-0 | 170 |
| 76. Brevin Jordan | Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, NV) | TE | 6-3 | 257 |
| 77. Derion Kendrick | South Pointe (Rock Hill, SC) | WR | 6-1 | 195 |
| 78. Robert Cooper | South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA) | DT | 6-1 | 350 |
| 79. Xavier Williams | Chaminade-Madonna Prep (Hollywood, FL) | WR | 6-1 | 190 |
| 80. Joshua Moore | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | WR | 6-1 | 156 |
| 81. Justin Shorter | South Brunswick (Monmouth Junction, NJ) | WR | 6-4 | 210 |
| 82. Al'vonte Woodard | Lamar (Houston, TX) | WR | 6-1 | 193 |
| 83. Cameron Rising | Newbury Park (Newbury Park, CA) | QB | 6-2 | 209 |
| 84. Penel Sewell | Desert Hills (St. George, UT) | OT | 6-4 | 319 |
| 85. Justin Mascoll | South Gwinnett (Snellville, GA) | DE | 6-4 | 237 |
| 86. Stephon Wynn | IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) | DE | 6-4 | 260 |
| 87. Mustapha Muhammad | Ridge Point (Missouri City, TX) | TE | 6-4 | 235 |
| 88. C.J. Moore | Union (Tulsa, OK) | WR | 6-5 | 175 |
| 89. Joey Gatewood | Bartram Trail (Jacksonville, FL) | ATH | 6-4 | 232 |
| 90. Marquan McCall | Oak Park (Oak Park, MI) | OG | 6-3 | 280 |
| 91. Jalyn Armour-Davis | St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile, AL) | CB | 6-0 | 160 |
| 92. Jack West | Saraland (Saraland, AL) | QB | 6-4 | 217 |
| 93. Aashari Crosswell | Hawkins (Los Angeles, CA) | S | 6-1 | 185 |
| 94. Emil Ekiyor | Cathedral (Indianapolis, IN) | OG | 6-2 | 322 |
| 95. Nik Bonitto | St. Thomas Aquinas (Fort Lauderdale, FL) | DE | 6-3 | 204 |
| 96. L'Christian Smith | Wayne (Dayton, OH) | ATH | 6-6 | 205 |
| 97. Devonta Jason | Landry-Walker (New Orleans, LA) | WR | 6-3 | 211 |
| 98. Tommy Brown | Mater Dei (Santa Ana, CA) | OT | 6-7 | 313 |
| 99. Adam Anderson | Rome (Rome, GA) | LB | 6-5 | 225 |
| 100. Manuel Allen | Centennial (Corona, CA) | WR | 6-2 | 175 |

SIDELINE

SPIRIT



BULLDOGS



TROJANS



COWBOYS



WILDCATS



GATORS

UGA, Mississippi State: Paul Abell; USC, UCLA: Peter Brouillet; Oklahoma State, Kansas State, Kansas: Tim Umphrey; Florida, Indiana: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Miami: Tom DiPace

JAYHAWKS



HURRICANES



HOOSIERS



BRUINS

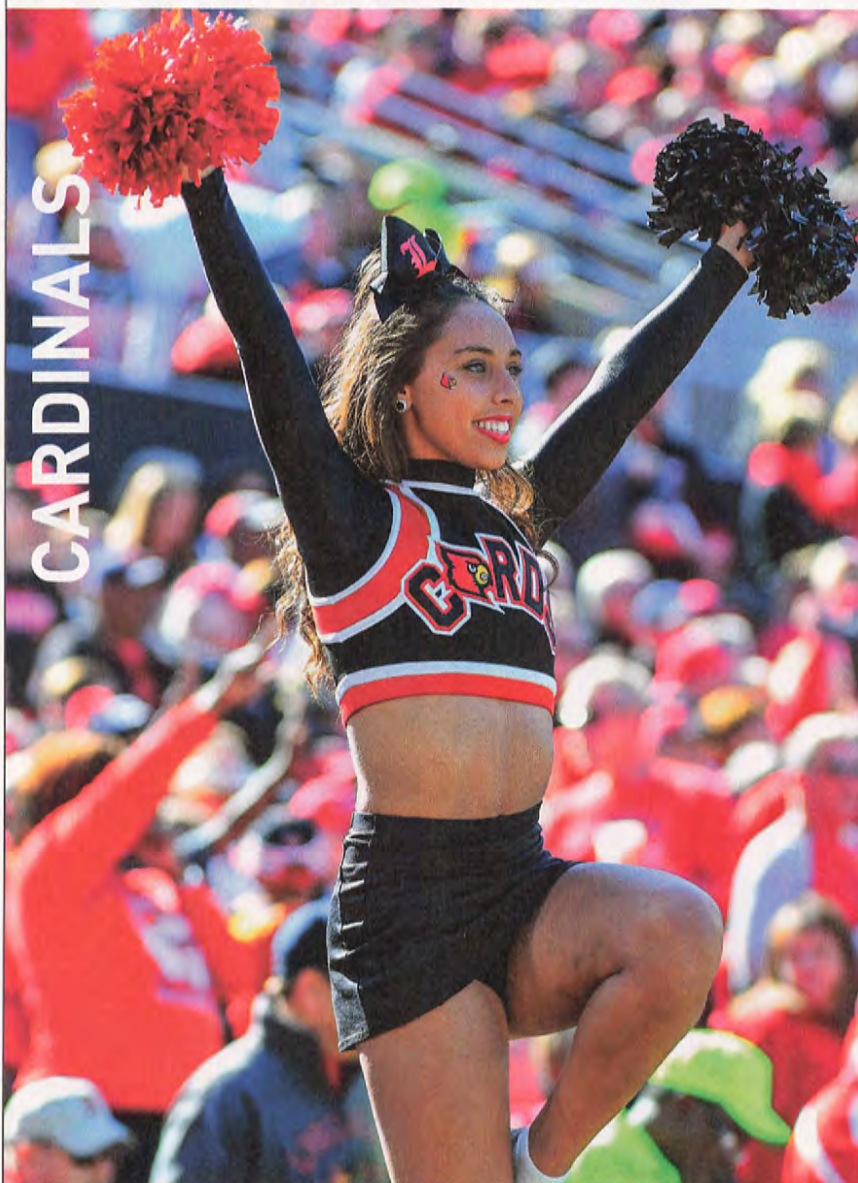


BULLDOGS

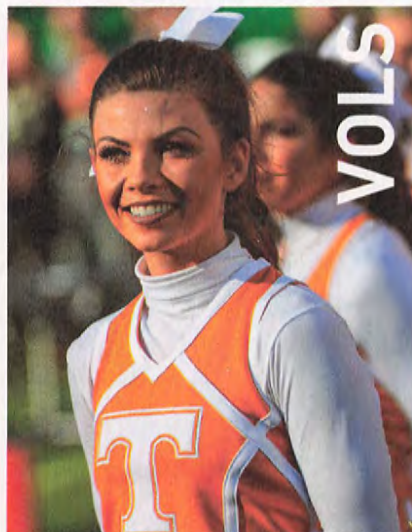
CORNHUSKERS



CARDINALS



VOLS

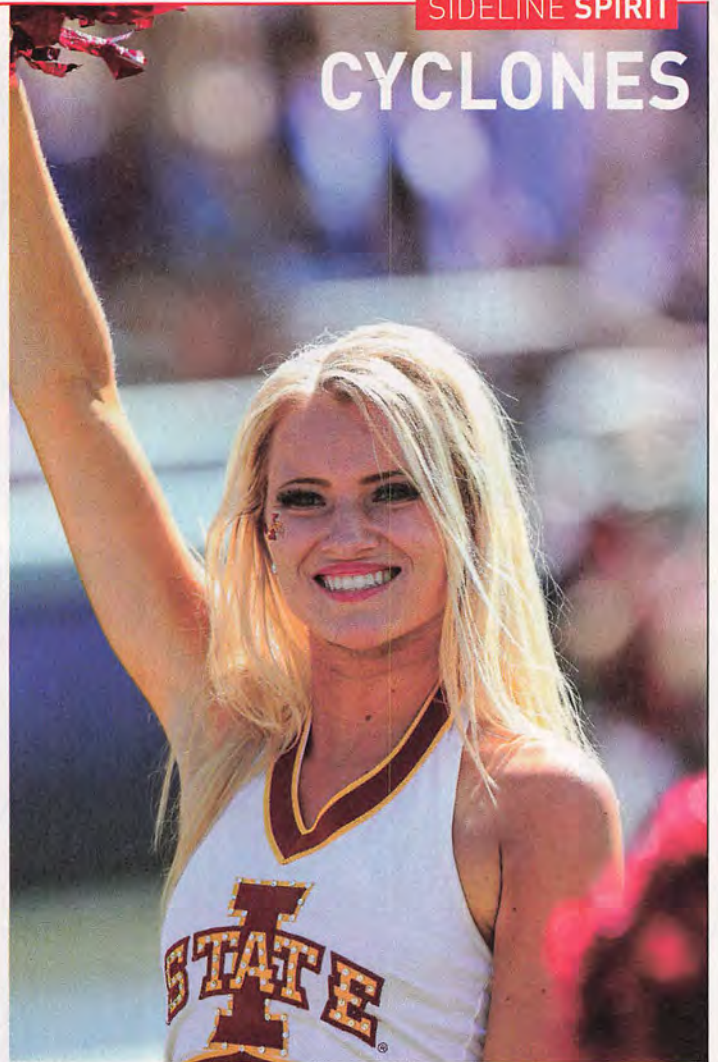


BUCKEYES

Nebraska, Kentucky: Tim Umphrey; Louisville, Tennessee, Ohio State, Ole Miss: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports;
Iowa State: Layne Murdoch; Arizona State: Craig Mitchell/dyer



WILDCATS



CYCLONES

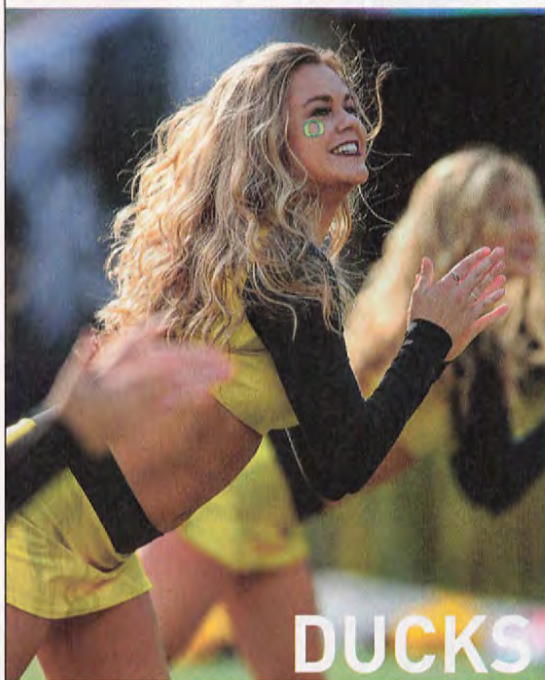


REBELS

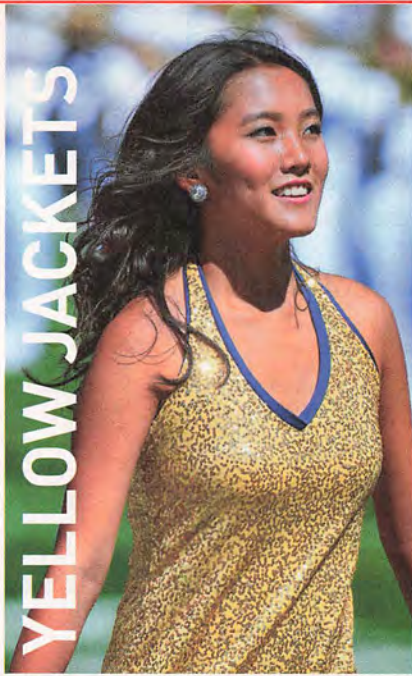


SUN DEVILS

WOLVERINES



Michigan: Tom Lynn; Oklahoma: Chris Covatta; Oregon: Craig Mitchell; Oregon: Margaret Bowles; Texas: Tim Umphrey; Arizona: Peter Brouillet; Minnesota: Bruce Schwartzman; Purdue, Auburn, Ga Tech: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports



YELLOW JACKETS



WILDCATS



GOLDEN GOPHERS



PANTHERS

2017 FBS COLLEGE FOOTBALL SCHEDULES

ACC

BOSTON COLLEGE (7-6, 2-6)

Chestnut Hill, MA
Sept. 1 at Northern Illinois
Sept. 9 Wake Forest
Sept. 16 Notre Dame
Sept. 23 at Clemson
Sept. 30 Central Michigan
Oct. 7 Virginia Tech
Oct. 14 at Louisville
Oct. 21 at Virginia
Oct. 27 Florida State
Nov. 11 NC State
Nov. 18 vs. Connecticut #
Nov. 25 at Syracuse
#Boston, MA

CLEMSON (14-1, 7-1)

Clemson, SC
Sept. 2 Kent State
Sept. 9 Auburn
Sept. 16 at Louisville
Sept. 23 Boston College
Sept. 30 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 7 Wake Forest
Oct. 13 at Syracuse
Oct. 28 Georgia Tech
Nov. 4 at NC State
Nov. 11 Florida State
Nov. 18 The Citadel
Nov. 25 at South Carolina

DUKE (4-8, 1-7)

Durham, NC
Sept. 2 NC Central
Sept. 9 Northwestern
Sept. 16 Baylor
Sept. 23 at North Carolina
Sept. 29 Miami
Oct. 7 at Virginia
Oct. 14 Florida State
Oct. 21 Pittsburgh
Oct. 28 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 11 at Army
Nov. 18 Georgia Tech
Nov. 25 at Wake Forest

FLORIDA STATE (10-3, 5-3)

Tallahassee, FL
Sept. 2 vs. Alabama #
Sept. 9 UL Monroe
Sept. 16 Miami
Sept. 23 NC State
Sept. 30 at Wake Forest
Oct. 14 at Duke
Oct. 21 Louisville
Oct. 27 at Boston College
Nov. 4 Syracuse
Nov. 11 at Clemson
Nov. 18 Delaware State
Nov. 25 at Florida
#Atlanta, GA

GEORGIA TECH (9-4, 4-4)

Atlanta, GA
Sept. 4 Tennessee #
Sept. 9 Jacksonville State
Sept. 16 at UCF
Sept. 23 Pittsburgh
Sept. 30 North Carolina
Oct. 12 at Miami
Oct. 21 Wake Forest
Oct. 28 at Clemson
Nov. 4 at Virginia
Nov. 11 Virginia Tech
Nov. 18 at Duke
Nov. 25 Georgia
#Mercedes-Benz Stadium

LOUISVILLE (9-4, 7-1)

Louisville, KY
Sept. 2 vs. Purdue #
Sept. 9 at North Carolina
Sept. 16 Clemson
Sept. 23 Kent State
Sept. 30 Murray State
Oct. 5 at NC State
Oct. 14 Boston College
Oct. 21 at Florida State
Oct. 28 at Wake Forest
Nov. 11 Virginia
Nov. 18 Syracuse
Nov. 25 at Kentucky
#Indianapolis, IN

MIAMI (9-4, 5-3)

Coral Gables, FL
Sept. 2 Bethune-Cookman
Sept. 9 at Arkansas State
Sept. 16 at Florida State
Sept. 23 Toledo
Sept. 29 at Duke
Oct. 12 Georgia Tech
Oct. 21 Syracuse
Oct. 28 at North Carolina
Nov. 4 Virginia Tech
Nov. 11 Notre Dame
Nov. 18 Virginia
Nov. 24 at Pittsburgh

NORTH CAROLINA (8-5, 5-3)

Chapel Hill, NC
Sept. 2 California
Sept. 9 Louisville
Sept. 16 at Old Dominion
Sept. 23 Duke
Sept. 30 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 7 Notre Dame
Oct. 14 Virginia
Oct. 21 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 28 Miami
Nov. 9 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 18 Western Carolina
Nov. 25 at NC State

NC STATE (7-6, 3-5)

Raleigh, NC
Sept. 2 vs. South Carolina #
Sept. 9 Marshall
Sept. 16 Furman
Sept. 23 at Florida State
Sept. 30 Syracuse
Oct. 5 Louisville
Oct. 14 at Pittsburgh
Oct. 28 at Notre Dame
Nov. 4 Clemson
Nov. 11 at Boston College
Nov. 18 at Wake Forest
Nov. 25 North Carolina
#Charlotte, NC

PITTSBURGH (8-5, 5-3)

Pittsburgh, PA
Sept. 2 Youngstown State
Sept. 9 at Penn State
Sept. 16 Oklahoma State
Sept. 23 at Georgia Tech
Sept. 30 Rice
Oct. 7 at Syracuse
Oct. 14 NC State
Oct. 21 at Duke
Oct. 28 Virginia
Nov. 9 North Carolina
Nov. 18 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 24 Miami

SYRACUSE (4-8, 2-6)

Syracuse, NY
Sept. 2 C. Connecticut St.
Sept. 9 Middle Tennessee
Sept. 16 Central Michigan
Sept. 23 at LSU
Sept. 30 at NC State
Oct. 7 Pittsburgh
Oct. 13 Clemson
Oct. 21 at Miami
Nov. 4 at Florida State
Nov. 11 Wake Forest
Nov. 18 at Louisville
Nov. 25 Boston College

VIRGINIA (2-10, 1-7)

Charlottesville, VA
Sept. 2 William & Mary
Sept. 9 Indiana
Sept. 16 Connecticut
Sept. 22 at Boise State
Oct. 7 Duke
Oct. 14 at North Carolina
Oct. 21 Boston College
Oct. 28 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 4 Georgia Tech
Nov. 11 at Louisville
Nov. 18 at Miami
Nov. 24 Virginia Tech

VIRGINIA TECH (10-4, 6-2)

Blacksburg, VA
Sept. 3 vs. West Virginia #
Sept. 9 Delaware
Sept. 16 at East Carolina
Sept. 23 Old Dominion
Sept. 30 Clemson
Oct. 7 at Boston College
Oct. 21 North Carolina
Oct. 28 Duke
Nov. 4 at Miami
Nov. 11 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 18 Pittsburgh
Nov. 24 at Virginia
#Landonover, MD

WAKE FOREST (7-6, 3-5)

Winston-Salem, NC
Aug. 31 Presbyterian
Sept. 9 at Boston College
Sept. 16 Utah State
Sept. 23 at Appalachian State
Sept. 30 Florida State
Oct. 7 at Clemson
Oct. 21 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 28 Louisville
Nov. 4 at Notre Dame
Nov. 11 at Syracuse
Nov. 18 NC State
Nov. 25 Duke

AMERICAN

CINCINNATI (4-8, 1-7)

Cincinnati, OH
Aug. 31 Austin Peay
Sept. 9 at Michigan
Sept. 16 at Miami (Ohio)
Sept. 23 at Navy
Sept. 30 Marshall
Oct. 7 UCF
Oct. 21 SMU
Oct. 28 at South Florida
Nov. 4 at Tulane
Nov. 10 Temple
Nov. 18 at East Carolina
Nov. 25 Connecticut

CONNECTICUT (3-9, 1-7)

Storrs, CT
Aug. 31 Holy Cross
Sept. 9 South Florida
Sept. 16 at Virginia
Sept. 30 at SMU
Oct. 6 Memphis
Oct. 14 at Temple
Oct. 21 Tulsa
Oct. 28 Missouri
Nov. 4 East Carolina
Nov. 11 at UCF
Nov. 18 vs. Boston College #
Nov. 25 at Cincinnati
#Boston, MA

EAST CAROLINA (3-9, 1-7)

Greenville, NC
Sept. 2 James Madison
Sept. 9 at West Virginia
Sept. 16 Virginia Tech
Sept. 30 South Florida
Oct. 7 Temple
Oct. 14 at UCF
Oct. 21 BYU
Oct. 28 at Houston
Nov. 4 at Connecticut
Nov. 11 Tulane
Nov. 18 Cincinnati
Nov. 25 at Memphis

HOUSTON (9-4, 5-3)

Houston, TX
Sept. 2 at UTSA
Sept. 9 at Arizona
Sept. 16 Rice
Sept. 23 Texas Tech
Sept. 30 at Temple
Oct. 7 SMU
Oct. 14 at Tulsa
Oct. 19 Memphis
Oct. 28 East Carolina
Nov. 4 at South Florida
Nov. 18 at Tulane
Nov. 24 Navy

MEMPHIS (8-5, 5-3)

Memphis, TN
Aug. 31 UL Monroe
Sept. 9 at UCF
Sept. 16 UCLA
Sept. 23 Southern Illinois
Sept. 30 at Georgia State
Oct. 6 at Connecticut
Oct. 14 Navy
Oct. 19 at Houston
Oct. 27 Tulane
Nov. 3 at Tulsa
Nov. 18 SMU
Nov. 25 East Carolina

NAVY (9-5, 7-1)

Annapolis, MD
Sept. 1 at Florida Atlantic
Sept. 9 Tulane
Sept. 23 Cincinnati
Sept. 30 at Tulsa
Oct. 7 Air Force
Oct. 14 at Memphis
Oct. 21 UCF
Nov. 2 at Temple
Nov. 11 SMU
Nov. 18 at Notre Dame
Nov. 24 at Houston
Dec. 9 vs. Army #
#Philadelphia, PA

SMU (5-7, 3-5)

Dallas, TX
Sept. 2 Stephen F. Austin
Sept. 9 North Texas
Sept. 16 at TCU
Sept. 23 Arkansas State
Sept. 30 Connecticut
Oct. 7 at Houston
Oct. 21 at Cincinnati
Oct. 27 Tulsa
Nov. 4 UCF
Nov. 11 at Navy
Nov. 18 at Memphis
Nov. 25 Tulane

SOUTH FLORIDA (11-2, 7-1)

Tampa, FL
Aug. 26 at San Jose State
Sept. 2 Stony Brook
Sept. 9 at Connecticut
Sept. 15 Illinois
Sept. 21 Temple
Sept. 30 at East Carolina
Oct. 14 Massachusetts
Oct. 21 at Tulane
Oct. 28 Cincinnati
Nov. 4 Houston
Nov. 18 Tulsa
Nov. 24 at UCF

TEMPLE (10-4, 7-1)

Philadelphia, PA
Sept. 2 at Notre Dame
Sept. 9 Villanova
Sept. 15 Massachusetts
Sept. 21 at South Florida
Sept. 30 Houston
Oct. 7 at East Carolina
Oct. 14 Connecticut
Oct. 21 at Army
Nov. 2 Navy
Nov. 10 at Cincinnati
Nov. 18 UCF
Nov. 25 at Tulsa

TULANE (4-8, 1-7)

New Orleans, LA
Sept. 2 Grambling State
Sept. 9 at Navy
Sept. 16 at Oklahoma
Sept. 23 Army
Oct. 7 Tulsa
Oct. 14 at FIU
Oct. 21 South Florida
Oct. 27 at Memphis
Nov. 4 Cincinnati
Nov. 11 at East Carolina
Nov. 18 Houston
Nov. 25 at SMU

TULSA (10-3, 6-2)

Tulsa, OK
Sept. 2 at Oklahoma State
Sept. 9 UL Lafayette
Sept. 16 at Toledo
Sept. 23 New Mexico
Sept. 30 Navy
Oct. 7 at Tulane
Oct. 14 Houston
Oct. 21 at Connecticut
Oct. 27 at SMU
Nov. 3 Memphis
Nov. 18 at South Florida
Nov. 25 Temple

UCF (6-7, 4-4)

Orlando, FL
Sept. 2 FIU
Sept. 9 Memphis
Sept. 16 Georgia Tech
Sept. 23 at Maryland
Sept. 30 Maine
Oct. 7 at Cincinnati
Oct. 14 East Carolina
Oct. 21 at Navy
Nov. 4 at SMU
Nov. 11 Connecticut
Nov. 18 at Temple
Nov. 24 South Florida

BIG TEN

ILLINOIS (3-9, 2-7)

Champaign, IL
Sept. 2 Ball State
Sept. 9 Western Kentucky
Sept. 15 at South Florida
Sept. 29 Nebraska
Oct. 7 at Iowa
Oct. 14 Rutgers
Oct. 21 at Minnesota
Oct. 28 Wisconsin
Nov. 4 at Purdue
Nov. 11 Indiana
Nov. 18 at Ohio State
Nov. 25 Northwestern

INDIANA (6-7, 4-5)

Bloomington, IN
Aug. 31 Ohio State
Sept. 9 at Virginia
Sept. 16 FIU
Sept. 23 Georgia Southern
Sept. 30 at Penn State
Oct. 14 Michigan
Oct. 21 at Michigan State
Oct. 28 at Maryland
Nov. 4 Wisconsin
Nov. 11 at Illinois
Nov. 18 Rutgers
Nov. 25 at Purdue

IOWA (8-5, 6-3)

Iowa City, IA
Sept. 2 Wyoming
Sept. 9 at Iowa State
Sept. 16 North Texas
Sept. 23 Penn State
Sept. 30 at Michigan State
Oct. 7 Illinois
Oct. 21 at Northwestern
Oct. 28 Minnesota
Nov. 4 Ohio State
Nov. 11 at Wisconsin
Nov. 18 Purdue
Nov. 24 at Nebraska

MARYLAND (6-7, 3-6)

College Park, MD
Sept. 2 at Texas
Sept. 9 Towson
Sept. 23 UCF
Sept. 30 at Minnesota
Oct. 7 at Ohio State
Oct. 14 Northwestern
Oct. 21 at Wisconsin
Oct. 28 Indiana
Nov. 4 vs. Rutgers #
Nov. 11 Michigan
Nov. 18 at Michigan State
Nov. 25 Penn State
#Bronx, NY

MICHIGAN (10-3, 7-2)

Ann Arbor, MI

Sept. 2 vs. Florida #
 Sept. 9 Cincinnati
 Sept. 16 Air Force
 Sept. 23 at Purdue
 Oct. 7 Michigan State
 Oct. 14 at Indiana
 Oct. 21 at Penn State
 Oct. 28 Rutgers
 Nov. 4 Minnesota
 Nov. 11 at Maryland
 Nov. 18 at Wisconsin
 Nov. 25 Ohio State
 #Arlington, TX

MICHIGAN STATE (3-9, 1-8)

East Lansing, MI

Sept. 2 Bowling Green
 Sept. 9 Western Michigan
 Sept. 23 Notre Dame
 Sept. 30 Iowa
 Oct. 7 at Michigan
 Oct. 14 at Minnesota
 Oct. 21 Indiana
 Oct. 28 at Northwestern
 Nov. 4 Penn State
 Nov. 11 at Ohio State
 Nov. 18 Maryland
 Nov. 25 at Rutgers

MINNESOTA (9-4, 5-4)

Minneapolis, MN

Aug. 31 Buffalo
 Sept. 9 at Oregon State
 Sept. 16 Middle Tennessee
 Sept. 30 Maryland
 Oct. 7 at Purdue
 Oct. 14 Michigan State
 Oct. 21 Illinois
 Oct. 28 at Iowa
 Nov. 4 at Michigan
 Nov. 11 Nebraska
 Nov. 18 at Northwestern
 Nov. 25 Wisconsin

NEBRASKA (9-4, 6-3)

Lincoln, NE

Sept. 2 Arkansas State
 Sept. 9 at Oregon
 Sept. 16 Northern Illinois
 Sept. 23 Rutgers
 Sept. 29 at Illinois
 Oct. 7 Wisconsin
 Oct. 14 Ohio State
 Oct. 28 at Purdue
 Nov. 4 Northwestern
 Nov. 11 at Minnesota
 Nov. 18 at Penn State
 Nov. 24 Iowa

NORTHWESTERN (7-6, 5-4)

Evanston, IL

Sept. 2 Nevada
 Sept. 9 at Duke
 Sept. 16 Bowling Green
 Sept. 30 at Wisconsin
 Oct. 7 Penn State
 Oct. 14 at Maryland
 Oct. 21 Iowa
 Oct. 28 Michigan State
 Nov. 4 at Nebraska
 Nov. 11 Purdue
 Nov. 18 Minnesota
 Nov. 25 at Illinois

OHIO STATE (11-2, 8-1)

Columbus, OH

Aug. 31 at Indiana
 Sept. 9 Oklahoma
 Sept. 16 Army
 Sept. 23 UNLV
 Sept. 30 at Rutgers
 Oct. 7 Maryland
 Oct. 14 at Nebraska
 Oct. 28 Penn State
 Nov. 4 at Iowa
 Nov. 11 Michigan State
 Nov. 18 Illinois
 Nov. 25 at Michigan

PENN STATE (11-3, 8-1)

University Park, PA

Sept. 2 Akron
 Sept. 9 Pittsburgh
 Sept. 16 Georgia State
 Sept. 23 at Iowa
 Sept. 30 Indiana
 Oct. 7 at Northwestern
 Oct. 21 Michigan
 Oct. 28 at Ohio State
 Nov. 4 at Michigan State
 Nov. 11 Rutgers
 Nov. 18 Nebraska
 Nov. 25 at Maryland

PURDUE (3-9, 1-8)

West Lafayette, IN

Sept. 2 vs. Louisville #
 Sept. 8 Ohio
 Sept. 16 at Missouri
 Sept. 23 Michigan
 Oct. 7 Minnesota
 Oct. 14 at Wisconsin
 Oct. 21 at Rutgers
 Oct. 28 Nebraska
 Nov. 4 Illinois
 Nov. 11 at Northwestern
 Nov. 18 at Iowa
 Nov. 25 Indiana
 #Indianapolis, IN

RUTGERS (2-10, 0-9)

New Brunswick, NJ

Sept. 1 Washington
 Sept. 9 Eastern Michigan
 Sept. 16 Morgan State
 Sept. 23 at Nebraska
 Sept. 30 Ohio State
 Oct. 14 at Illinois
 Oct. 21 Purdue
 Oct. 28 at Michigan
 Nov. 4 vs. Maryland #
 Nov. 11 at Penn State
 Nov. 18 at Indiana
 Nov. 25 Michigan State
 #Bronx, NY

WISCONSIN (11-3, 7-2)

Madison, WI

Sept. 1 Utah State
 Sept. 9 Florida Atlantic
 Sept. 16 at BYU
 Sept. 30 Northwestern
 Oct. 7 at Nebraska
 Oct. 14 Purdue
 Oct. 21 Maryland
 Oct. 28 at Illinois
 Nov. 4 at Indiana
 Nov. 11 Iowa
 Nov. 18 Michigan
 Nov. 25 at Minnesota

BIG 12**BAYLOR (7-6, 3-6)**

Waco, TX

Sept. 2 Liberty
 Sept. 9 UTSA
 Sept. 16 at Duke
 Sept. 23 Oklahoma
 Sept. 30 at Kansas State
 Oct. 14 at Oklahoma State
 Oct. 21 West Virginia
 Oct. 28 Texas
 Nov. 4 at Kansas
 Nov. 11 vs. Texas Tech #
 Nov. 18 Iowa State
 Nov. 24 at TCU
 #Arlington, TX

IOWA STATE (3-9, 2-7)

Ames, IA

Sept. 2 Northern Iowa
 Sept. 9 Iowa
 Sept. 16 at Akron
 Sept. 28 Texas
 Oct. 7 at Oklahoma
 Oct. 14 Kansas
 Oct. 21 at Texas Tech
 Oct. 28 TCU
 Nov. 4 at West Virginia
 Nov. 11 Oklahoma State
 Nov. 18 at Baylor
 Nov. 25 at Kansas State

KANSAS (2-10, 1-8)

Lawrence, KS

Sept. 2 SE Missouri State
 Sept. 9 Central Michigan
 Sept. 16 at Ohio
 Sept. 23 West Virginia
 Oct. 7 Texas Tech
 Oct. 14 at Iowa State
 Oct. 21 at TCU
 Oct. 28 Kansas State
 Nov. 4 Baylor
 Nov. 11 at Texas
 Nov. 18 Oklahoma
 Nov. 25 at Oklahoma State

KANSAS STATE (9-4, 6-3)

Manhattan, KS

Sept. 2 Central Arkansas
 Sept. 9 Charlotte
 Sept. 16 at Vanderbilt
 Sept. 30 Baylor
 Oct. 7 at Texas
 Oct. 14 TCU
 Oct. 21 Oklahoma
 Oct. 28 at Kansas
 Nov. 4 at Texas Tech
 Nov. 11 West Virginia
 Nov. 18 at Oklahoma State
 Nov. 25 Iowa State

OKLAHOMA (11-2, 9-0)

Norman, OK

Sept. 2 UTEP
 Sept. 9 at Ohio State
 Sept. 16 Tulane
 Sept. 23 at Baylor
 Oct. 7 Iowa State
 Oct. 14 vs. Texas #
 Oct. 21 at Kansas State
 Oct. 28 Texas Tech
 Nov. 4 at Oklahoma State
 Nov. 11 TCU
 Nov. 18 at Kansas
 Nov. 25 West Virginia
 #Dallas, TX

OKLAHOMA STATE (10-3, 7-1)

Stillwater, OK

Sept. 2 Tulsa
 Sept. 9 at South Alabama
 Sept. 16 at Pittsburgh
 Sept. 23 TCU
 Sept. 30 at Texas Tech
 Oct. 14 Baylor
 Oct. 21 at Texas
 Oct. 28 at West Virginia
 Nov. 4 Oklahoma
 Nov. 11 at Iowa State
 Nov. 18 Kansas State
 Nov. 25 Kansas

TCU (6-7, 4-5)

Fort Worth, TX

Sept. 2 Jackson State
 Sept. 9 at Arkansas
 Sept. 16 SMU
 Sept. 23 at Oklahoma State
 Oct. 7 West Virginia
 Oct. 14 at Kansas State
 Oct. 21 Kansas
 Oct. 28 at Iowa State
 Nov. 4 Texas
 Nov. 11 at Oklahoma
 Nov. 18 at Texas Tech
 Nov. 24 Baylor

TEXAS (5-7, 3-6)

Austin, TX

Sept. 2 Maryland
 Sept. 9 San Jose State
 Sept. 16 at USC
 Sept. 28 at Iowa State
 Oct. 7 Kansas State
 Oct. 14 vs. Oklahoma #
 Oct. 21 Oklahoma State
 Oct. 28 at Baylor
 Nov. 4 at TCU
 Nov. 11 Kansas
 Nov. 18 at West Virginia
 Nov. 24 Texas Tech
 #Dallas, TX

TEXAS TECH (5-7, 3-6)

Lubbock, TX

Sept. 3 Eastern Washington
 Sept. 16 Arizona State
 Sept. 23 at Houston
 Sept. 30 Oklahoma State
 Oct. 7 at Kansas
 Oct. 14 at West Virginia
 Oct. 21 Iowa State
 Oct. 28 at Oklahoma
 Nov. 4 Kansas State
 Nov. 11 vs. Baylor #
 Nov. 18 TCU
 Nov. 24 at Texas
 #Arlington, TX

WEST VIRGINIA (10-3, 7-2)

Morgantown, WV

Sept. 3 vs. Virginia Tech #
 Sept. 9 East Carolina
 Sept. 16 Delaware State
 Sept. 23 at Kansas
 Oct. 7 at TCU
 Oct. 14 Texas Tech
 Oct. 21 at Baylor
 Oct. 28 Oklahoma State
 Nov. 4 Iowa State
 Nov. 11 at Kansas State
 Nov. 18 Texas
 Nov. 25 at Oklahoma
 #Lander, MD

C-USA**CHARLOTTE (4-8, 3-5)**

Charlotte, NC

Sept. 2 at Eastern Michigan
 Sept. 9 at Kansas State
 Sept. 16 North Carolina A&T
 Sept. 23 Georgia State
 Sept. 30 at FIU
 Oct. 7 Marshall
 Oct. 14 at Western Kentucky
 Oct. 21 UAB
 Nov. 4 at Old Dominion
 Nov. 11 Middle Tennessee
 Nov. 18 at Southern Miss
 Nov. 25 Florida Atlantic

FLORIDA ATLANTIC (3-9, 2-6)

Boca Raton, FL

Sept. 1 Navy
 Sept. 9 at Wisconsin
 Sept. 16 Bethune-Cookman
 Sept. 23 at Buffalo
 Sept. 30 Middle Tennessee
 Oct. 7 at Old Dominion
 Oct. 21 North Texas
 Oct. 28 at Western Kentucky
 Nov. 3 Marshall
 Nov. 11 at Louisiana Tech
 Nov. 18 FIU
 Nov. 25 at Charlotte

FIU (4-8, 4-4)

Miami, FL

Sept. 2 at UCF
 Sept. 9 Alcorn State
 Sept. 16 at Indiana
 Sept. 23 at Rice
 Sept. 30 Charlotte
 Oct. 7 at Middle Tennessee
 Oct. 14 Tulane
 Oct. 28 at Marshall
 Nov. 4 UTSA
 Nov. 11 Old Dominion
 Nov. 18 at Florida Atlantic
 Nov. 25 Western Kentucky

LOUISIANA TECH (9-5, 6-2)

Ruston, LA

Sept. 2 Northwestern State
 Sept. 9 Mississippi State
 Sept. 16 at Western Kentucky
 Sept. 23 at South Carolina
 Sept. 30 South Alabama
 Oct. 7 at UAB
 Oct. 21 Southern Miss
 Oct. 28 at Rice
 Nov. 4 North Texas
 Nov. 11 Florida Atlantic
 Nov. 18 at UTEP
 Nov. 25 UTSA

MARSHALL (3-9, 2-6)

Huntington, WV

Sept. 2 Miami (Ohio)
 Sept. 9 at NC State
 Sept. 16 Kent State
 Sept. 30 at Cincinnati
 Oct. 7 at Charlotte
 Oct. 14 Old Dominion
 Oct. 20 at Middle Tennessee
 Oct. 28 FIU
 Nov. 3 at Florida Atlantic
 Nov. 11 Western Kentucky
 Nov. 18 at UTSA
 Nov. 25 Southern Miss

MIDDLE TENNESSEE (8-5, 5-3)

Murfreesboro, TN

Sept. 2 Vanderbilt
 Sept. 9 at Syracuse
 Sept. 16 at Minnesota
 Sept. 23 Bowling Green
 Sept. 30 at Florida Atlantic
 Oct. 7 FIU
 Oct. 14 at UAB
 Oct. 20 Marshall
 Nov. 4 UTEP
 Nov. 11 at Charlotte
 Nov. 17 at Western Kentucky
 Nov. 25 Old Dominion

NORTH TEXAS (5-8, 3-5)

Denton, TX

Sept. 2 Lamar
 Sept. 9 at SMU
 Sept. 16 at Iowa
 Sept. 23 UAB
 Sept. 30 at Southern Miss
 Oct. 14 UTSA
 Oct. 21 at Florida Atlantic
 Oct. 28 Old Dominion
 Nov. 4 at Louisiana Tech
 Nov. 11 UTEP
 Nov. 18 Army
 Nov. 25 at Rice

OLD DOMINION (10-3, 7-1)

Norfolk, VA

Sept. 2 Albany
 Sept. 9 at Massachusetts
 Sept. 16 North Carolina
 Sept. 23 at Virginia Tech
 Oct. 7 Florida Atlantic
 Oct. 14 at Marshall
 Oct. 20 Western Kentucky
 Oct. 28 at North Texas
 Nov. 4 Charlotte
 Nov. 11 at FIU
 Nov. 18 Rice
 Nov. 25 at Middle Tennessee

RICE (3-9, 2-6)

Houston, TX

Aug. 26 vs. Stanford #
 Sept. 9 at UTEP
 Sept. 16 at Houston
 Sept. 23 FIU
 Sept. 30 at Pittsburgh
 Oct. 7 Army
 Oct. 21 at UTSA
 Oct. 28 Louisiana Tech
 Nov. 4 at UAB
 Nov. 11 Southern Miss
 Nov. 18 at Old Dominion
 Nov. 25 North Texas
 #Sydney, Australia

SOUTHERN MISS (7-6, 4-4)

Hattiesburg, MS

Sept. 2 Kentucky
 Sept. 9 Southern
 Sept. 16 at UL Monroe
 Sept. 30 North Texas
 Oct. 7 at UTSA
 Oct. 14 UTEP
 Oct. 21 at Louisiana Tech
 Oct. 28 UAB
 Nov. 4 at Tennessee
 Nov. 11 at Rice
 Nov. 18 Charlotte
 Nov. 25 at Marshall

UAB

Birmingham, AL

Sept. 2 Alabama A&M
 Sept. 9 at Ball State
 Sept. 16 Coastal Carolina
 Sept. 23 at North Texas
 Oct. 7 Louisiana Tech
 Oct. 14 Middle Tennessee
 Oct. 21 at Charlotte
 Oct. 28 at Southern Miss
 Nov. 4 Rice
 Nov. 11 at UTSA
 Nov. 18 at Florida
 Nov. 25 UTEP

UTEP (4-8, 2-6)

El Paso, TX

Sept. 2 at Oklahoma
 Sept. 9 Rice
 Sept. 15 Arizona
 Sept. 23 at New Mexico State
 Sept. 30 at Army
 Oct. 7 Western Kentucky
 Oct. 14 at Southern Miss
 Oct. 28 UTSA
 Nov. 4 at Middle Tennessee
 Nov. 11 at North Texas
 Nov. 18 Louisiana Tech
 Nov. 25 at UAB

UTSA (6-7, 5-3)

San Antonio, TX

Sept. 2 Houston
 Sept. 9 at Baylor
 Sept. 16 Southern
 Sept. 23 at Texas State
 Oct. 7 Southern Miss
 Oct. 14 at North Texas
 Oct. 21 Rice
 Oct. 28 at UTEP
 Nov. 4 at FIU
 Nov. 11 UAB
 Nov. 18 Marshall
 Nov. 25 at Louisiana Tech

WESTERN KENTUCKY (11-3, 7-1)

Bowling Green, KY

Sept. 2 Eastern Kentucky
 Sept. 9 at Illinois
 Sept. 16 Louisiana Tech
 Sept. 23 Ball State
 Oct. 7 at UTEP
 Oct. 14 Charlotte
 Oct. 20 at Old Dominion
 Oct. 28 Florida Atlantic
 Nov. 4 at Vanderbilt
 Nov. 11 at Marshall
 Nov. 17 Middle Tennessee
 Nov. 25 at FIU

MAC**AKRON (5-7, 3-5)**

Akron, OH

Sept. 2 at Penn State
 Sept. 9 Arkansas-Pine Bluff
 Sept. 16 Iowa State
 Sept. 23 at Troy
 Sept. 30 at Bowling Green
 Oct. 7 Ball State
 Oct. 14 at Western Michigan
 Oct. 21 at Toledo
 Oct. 28 Buffalo
 Nov. 7 at Miami (Ohio)
 Nov. 14 Ohio
 Nov. 21 Kent State

BALL STATE (4-8, 1-7)

Muncie, IN

Sept. 2 at Illinois
 Sept. 9 UAB
 Sept. 16 Tennessee Tech
 Sept. 23 at Western Kentucky
 Sept. 30 at Western Michigan
 Oct. 7 at Akron
 Oct. 21 Central Michigan
 Oct. 26 Toledo
 Nov. 2 at Eastern Michigan
 Nov. 9 at Northern Illinois
 Nov. 16 Buffalo
 Nov. 21 Miami (Ohio)

BOWLING GREEN (4-8, 3-5)

Bowling Green, OH
 Sept. 2 at Michigan State
 Sept. 9 South Dakota
 Sept. 16 at Northwestern
 Sept. 23 at Middle Tennessee
 Sept. 30 Akron
 Oct. 7 at Miami (Ohio)
 Oct. 14 Ohio
 Oct. 21 Northern Illinois
 Oct. 31 at Kent State
 Nov. 7 at Buffalo
 Nov. 15 Toledo
 Nov. 21 at Eastern Michigan

BUFFALO (2-10, 1-7)

Buffalo, NY
 Aug. 31 at Minnesota
 Sept. 9 at Army
 Sept. 16 Colgate
 Sept. 23 Florida Atlantic
 Sept. 30 at Kent State
 Oct. 7 Western Michigan
 Oct. 14 Northern Illinois
 Oct. 21 at Miami (Ohio)
 Oct. 28 at Akron
 Nov. 7 Bowling Green
 Nov. 16 at Ball State
 Nov. 24 Ohio

CENTRAL MICHIGAN (6-7, 3-5)

Mt. Pleasant, MI
 Aug. 31 Rhode Island
 Sept. 9 at Kansas
 Sept. 16 at Syracuse
 Sept. 23 Miami (Ohio)
 Sept. 30 at Boston College
 Oct. 7 at Ohio
 Oct. 14 Toledo
 Oct. 21 at Ball State
 Nov. 1 at Western Michigan
 Nov. 8 Eastern Michigan
 Nov. 14 at Kent State
 Nov. 24 Northern Illinois

EASTERN MICHIGAN (7-6, 4-4)

Ypsilanti, MI
 Sept. 1 Charlotte
 Sept. 9 at Rutgers
 Sept. 16 Ohio
 Sept. 23 at Kentucky
 Oct. 7 at Toledo
 Oct. 14 at Army
 Oct. 21 Western Michigan
 Oct. 26 at Northern Illinois
 Nov. 2 Ball State
 Nov. 8 at Central Michigan
 Nov. 15 at Miami (Ohio)
 Nov. 21 Bowling Green

KENT STATE (3-9, 2-6)

Kent, OH
 Sept. 2 at Clemson
 Sept. 9 Howard
 Sept. 16 at Marshall
 Sept. 23 at Louisville
 Sept. 30 Buffalo
 Oct. 7 at Northern Illinois
 Oct. 14 Miami (Ohio)
 Oct. 21 at Ohio
 Oct. 31 Bowling Green
 Nov. 8 at Western Michigan
 Nov. 14 Central Michigan
 Nov. 21 Akron

MIAMI (OHIO) (6-7, 2-2)

Oxford, OH
 Sept. 2 at Marshall
 Sept. 9 Austin Peay
 Sept. 16 Cincinnati
 Sept. 23 at Central Michigan
 Sept. 30 at Notre Dame
 Oct. 7 Bowling Green
 Oct. 14 at Kent State
 Oct. 21 Buffalo
 Oct. 31 at Ohio
 Nov. 7 Akron
 Nov. 15 Eastern Michigan
 Nov. 21 at Ball State

NORTHERN ILLINOIS (5-7, 5-3)

DeKalb, IL
 Sept. 1 Boston College
 Sept. 9 Eastern Illinois
 Sept. 16 at Nebraska
 Sept. 30 at San Diego State
 Oct. 7 Kent State
 Oct. 14 at Buffalo
 Oct. 21 at Bowling Green
 Oct. 26 Eastern Michigan
 Nov. 2 at Toledo
 Nov. 9 Ball State
 Nov. 15 Western Michigan
 Nov. 24 at Central Michigan

OHIO (8-6, 6-2)

Athens, OH
 Sept. 2 Hampton
 Sept. 8 at Purdue
 Sept. 16 Kansas
 Sept. 23 at Eastern Michigan
 Sept. 30 at Massachusetts
 Oct. 7 Central Michigan
 Oct. 14 at Bowling Green
 Oct. 21 Kent State
 Oct. 31 Miami (Ohio)
 Nov. 8 Toledo
 Nov. 14 at Akron
 Nov. 24 at Buffalo

TOLEDO (9-4, 6-2)

Toledo, OH
 Aug. 31 Elon
 Sept. 9 at Nevada
 Sept. 16 Tulsa
 Sept. 23 at Miami (Fla.)
 Oct. 7 Eastern Michigan
 Oct. 14 at Central Michigan
 Oct. 21 Akron
 Oct. 26 at Ball State
 Nov. 2 Northern Illinois
 Nov. 8 at Ohio
 Nov. 15 at Bowling Green
 Nov. 24 Western Michigan

WESTERN MICHIGAN (13-1, 8-0)

Kalamazoo, MI
 Sept. 2 at USC
 Sept. 9 at Michigan State
 Sept. 16 Idaho
 Sept. 23 Wagner
 Sept. 30 Ball State
 Oct. 7 at Buffalo
 Oct. 14 Akron
 Oct. 21 at Eastern Michigan
 Nov. 1 Central Michigan
 Nov. 8 Kent State
 Nov. 15 at Northern Illinois
 Nov. 24 at Toledo

MOUNTAIN WEST
AIR FORCE (10-3, 5-3)

Colorado Springs, CO
 Sept. 2 VMI
 Sept. 16 at Michigan
 Sept. 23 San Diego State
 Sept. 30 at New Mexico
 Oct. 7 at Navy
 Oct. 14 UNLV
 Oct. 21 at Nevada
 Oct. 28 at Colorado State
 Nov. 4 Army
 Nov. 11 Wyoming
 Nov. 18 at Boise State
 Nov. 25 Utah State

BOISE STATE (10-3, 6-2)

Boise, ID
 Sept. 2 Troy
 Sept. 9 at Washington State
 Sept. 16 New Mexico
 Sept. 22 Virginia
 Oct. 6 at BYU
 Oct. 14 at San Diego State
 Oct. 21 Wyoming
 Oct. 28 at Utah State
 Nov. 4 Nevada
 Nov. 11 at Colorado State
 Nov. 18 Air Force
 Nov. 25 at Fresno State

COLORADO STATE (7-6, 5-3)

Fort Collins, CO
 Aug. 26 Oregon State
 Sept. 1 vs. Colorado #
 Sept. 9 Abilene Christian
 Sept. 16 at Alabama
 Sept. 30 at Hawaii
 Oct. 7 at Utah State
 Oct. 14 Nevada
 Oct. 21 at New Mexico
 Oct. 28 Air Force
 Nov. 4 at Wyoming
 Nov. 11 Boise State
 Nov. 18 San Jose State
 #Denver, CO

FRESNO STATE (1-11, 0-8)

Fresno, CA
 Sept. 2 Incarnate Word
 Sept. 9 at Alabama
 Sept. 16 at Washington
 Sept. 30 Nevada
 Oct. 7 at San Jose State
 Oct. 14 New Mexico
 Oct. 21 at San Diego State
 Oct. 28 UNLV
 Nov. 4 BYU
 Nov. 11 at Hawaii
 Nov. 18 at Wyoming
 Nov. 25 Boise State

HAWAII (7-7, 4-4)

Honolulu, HI
 Aug. 26 Massachusetts
 Sept. 2 Western Carolina
 Sept. 9 at UCLA
 Sept. 23 at Wyoming
 Sept. 30 Colorado State
 Oct. 7 at Nevada
 Oct. 14 San Jose State
 Oct. 28 San Diego State
 Nov. 4 at UNLV
 Nov. 11 Fresno State
 Nov. 18 at Utah State
 Nov. 25 BYU

NEVADA (5-7, 3-5)

Reno, NV
 Sept. 2 at Northwestern
 Sept. 9 Toledo
 Sept. 16 Idaho State
 Sept. 23 at Washington State
 Sept. 30 at Fresno State
 Oct. 7 Hawaii
 Oct. 14 at Colorado State
 Oct. 21 Air Force
 Nov. 4 at Boise State
 Nov. 11 San Jose State
 Nov. 18 at San Diego State
 Nov. 25 UNLV

NEW MEXICO (9-4, 6-2)

Albuquerque, NM
 Sept. 2 Abilene Christian
 Sept. 9 New Mexico State
 Sept. 16 at Boise State
 Sept. 23 at Tulsa
 Sept. 30 Air Force
 Oct. 14 at Fresno State
 Oct. 21 Colorado State
 Oct. 28 at Wyoming
 Nov. 4 Utah State
 Nov. 11 at Texas A&M
 Nov. 18 UNLV
 Nov. 25 at San Diego State

SAN DIEGO STATE (11-3, 6-2)

San Diego, CA
 Sept. 2 UC Davis
 Sept. 9 at Arizona State
 Sept. 16 Stanford
 Sept. 23 at Air Force
 Sept. 30 Northern Illinois
 Oct. 7 at UNLV
 Oct. 14 Boise State
 Oct. 21 Fresno State
 Oct. 28 at Hawaii
 Nov. 4 at San Jose State
 Nov. 18 Nevada
 Nov. 25 New Mexico

SAN JOSE STATE (4-8, 3-5)

San Jose, CA
 Aug. 26 South Florida
 Sept. 2 Cal Poly
 Sept. 9 at Texas
 Sept. 16 at Utah
 Sept. 23 Utah State
 Sept. 30 at UNLV
 Oct. 7 Fresno State
 Oct. 14 at Hawaii
 Oct. 28 at BYU
 Nov. 4 San Diego State
 Nov. 11 at Nevada
 Nov. 18 at Colorado State
 Nov. 25 Wyoming

UNLV (4-8, 3-5)

Las Vegas, NV
 Sept. 2 Howard
 Sept. 9 at Idaho
 Sept. 23 at Ohio State
 Sept. 30 San Jose State
 Oct. 7 San Diego State
 Oct. 14 at Air Force
 Oct. 21 Utah State
 Oct. 28 at Fresno State
 Nov. 4 Hawaii
 Nov. 10 BYU
 Nov. 18 at New Mexico
 Nov. 25 at Nevada

UTAH STATE (3-9, 1-7)

Logan, UT
 Sept. 1 at Wisconsin
 Sept. 7 Idaho State
 Sept. 16 at Wake Forest
 Sept. 23 at San Jose State
 Sept. 30 BYU
 Oct. 7 Colorado State
 Oct. 14 Wyoming
 Oct. 21 at UNLV
 Oct. 28 Boise State
 Nov. 4 at New Mexico
 Nov. 18 Hawaii
 Nov. 25 at Air Force

WYOMING (8-6, 6-2)

Laramie, WY
 Sept. 2 at Iowa
 Sept. 9 Gardner-Webb
 Sept. 16 Oregon
 Sept. 23 Hawaii
 Sept. 30 Texas State
 Oct. 14 at Utah State
 Oct. 21 at Boise State
 Oct. 28 New Mexico
 Nov. 4 Colorado State
 Nov. 11 at Air Force
 Nov. 18 Fresno State
 Nov. 25 at San Jose State

PAC-12
ARIZONA (3-9, 1-8)

Tucson, AZ
 Sept. 2 Northern Arizona
 Sept. 9 Houston
 Sept. 15 at UTEP
 Sept. 22 Utah
 Oct. 7 at Colorado
 Oct. 14 UCLA
 Oct. 21 at California
 Oct. 28 Washington State
 Nov. 4 at USC
 Nov. 11 Oregon State
 Nov. 18 at Oregon
 Nov. 25 at Arizona State

ARIZONA STATE (5-7, 2-7)

Tempe, AZ
 Aug. 31 New Mexico State
 Sept. 9 San Diego State
 Sept. 16 at Texas Tech
 Sept. 23 Oregon
 Sept. 30 at Stanford
 Oct. 14 Washington
 Oct. 21 at Utah
 Oct. 28 USC
 Nov. 4 Colorado
 Nov. 11 at UCLA
 Nov. 18 at Oregon State
 Nov. 25 Arizona

CALIFORNIA (5-7, 3-6)

Berkeley, CA
 Sept. 2 at North Carolina
 Sept. 9 Weber State
 Sept. 16 Ole Miss
 Sept. 23 USC
 Sept. 30 at Oregon
 Oct. 7 at Washington
 Oct. 13 Washington State
 Oct. 21 Arizona
 Oct. 28 at Colorado
 Nov. 4 Oregon State
 Nov. 18 at Stanford
 Nov. 24 at UCLA

COLORADO (10-4, 8-1)

Boulder, CO
 Sept. 1 vs. Colorado State #
 Sept. 9 Texas State
 Sept. 16 Northern Colorado
 Sept. 23 Washington
 Sept. 30 at UCLA
 Oct. 7 Arizona
 Oct. 14 at Oregon State
 Oct. 21 at Washington State
 Oct. 28 California
 Nov. 4 at Arizona State
 Nov. 11 USC
 Nov. 25 at Utah
 #Denver, CO

OREGON (4-8, 2-7)

Eugene, OR
 Sept. 2 Southern Utah
 Sept. 9 Nebraska
 Sept. 16 at Wyoming
 Sept. 23 at Arizona State
 Sept. 30 California
 Oct. 7 Washington State
 Oct. 14 at Stanford
 Oct. 21 at UCLA
 Oct. 28 Utah
 Nov. 4 at Washington
 Nov. 18 Arizona
 Nov. 25 Oregon State

OREGON STATE (4-8, 3-6)

Corvallis, OR
 Aug. 26 at Colorado State
 Sept. 2 Portland State
 Sept. 9 Minnesota
 Sept. 16 at Washington State
 Sept. 30 Washington
 Oct. 7 at USC
 Oct. 14 Colorado
 Oct. 26 Stanford
 Nov. 4 at California
 Nov. 11 at Arizona
 Nov. 18 Arizona State
 Nov. 25 at Oregon

STANFORD (10-3, 6-3)

Stanford, CA
 Aug. 26 vs. Rice #
 Sept. 9 at USC
 Sept. 16 at San Diego State
 Sept. 23 UCLA
 Sept. 30 Arizona State
 Oct. 7 at Utah
 Oct. 14 Oregon
 Oct. 26 at Oregon State
 Nov. 4 at Washington State
 Nov. 10 Washington
 Nov. 18 California
 Nov. 25 Notre Dame
 #Sydney, Australia

UCLA (4-8, 2-7)

Los Angeles, CA
 Sept. 3 Texas A&M
 Sept. 9 Hawaii
 Sept. 16 at Memphis
 Sept. 23 at Stanford
 Sept. 30 Colorado
 Oct. 14 at Arizona
 Oct. 21 Oregon
 Oct. 28 at Washington
 Nov. 3 at Utah
 Nov. 11 Arizona State
 Nov. 18 at USC
 Nov. 24 California

USC (10-3, 7-2)

Los Angeles, CA
 Sept. 2 Western Michigan
 Sept. 9 Stanford
 Sept. 16 Texas
 Sept. 23 at California
 Sept. 29 at Washington State
 Oct. 7 Oregon State
 Oct. 14 Utah
 Oct. 21 at Notre Dame
 Oct. 28 at Arizona State
 Nov. 4 Arizona
 Nov. 11 at Colorado
 Nov. 18 UCLA

UTAH (9-4, 5-4)

Salt Lake City, UT
 Aug. 31 North Dakota
 Sept. 9 at BYU
 Sept. 16 San Jose State
 Sept. 22 at Arizona
 Oct. 7 Stanford
 Oct. 14 at USC
 Oct. 21 Arizona State
 Oct. 28 at Oregon
 Nov. 3 UCLA
 Nov. 11 Washington State
 Nov. 18 at Washington
 Nov. 25 Colorado

WASHINGTON (12-2, 8-1)

Seattle, WA
 Sept. 1 at Rutgers
 Sept. 9 Montana
 Sept. 16 Fresno State
 Sept. 23 at Colorado
 Sept. 30 at Oregon State
 Oct. 7 California
 Oct. 14 at Arizona State
 Oct. 28 UCLA
 Nov. 4 Oregon
 Nov. 10 at Stanford
 Nov. 18 Utah
 Nov. 25 Washington State

WASHINGTON STATE (8-5, 7-2)

Pullman, WA
 Sept. 2 Montana State
 Sept. 9 Boise State
 Sept. 16 Oregon State
 Sept. 23 Nevada
 Sept. 29 USC
 Oct. 7 at Oregon
 Oct. 13 at California
 Oct. 21 Colorado
 Oct. 28 at Arizona
 Nov. 4 Stanford
 Nov. 11 at Utah
 Nov. 25 at Washington

SEC
ALABAMA (14-1, 8-0)

Tuscaloosa, AL
 Sept. 2 vs. Florida State #
 Sept. 9 Fresno State
 Sept. 16 Colorado State
 Sept. 23 at Vanderbilt
 Sept. 30 Ole Miss
 Oct. 7 at Texas A&M
 Oct. 14 Arkansas
 Oct. 21 Tennessee
 Nov. 4 LSU
 Nov. 11 at Mississippi State
 Nov. 18 Mercer
 Nov. 25 at Auburn
 #Atlanta, GA

ARKANSAS (7-6, 3-5)

Fayetteville, AR
 Sept. 2 vs. Florida A&M #
 Sept. 9 TCU
 Sept. 23 vs. Texas A&M %
 Sept. 30 New Mexico State
 Oct. 7 at South Carolina
 Oct. 14 at Alabama
 Oct. 21 Auburn
 Oct. 28 at Ole Miss
 Nov. 4 Coastal Carolina
 Nov. 11 at LSU
 Nov. 18 Mississippi State
 Nov. 25 Missouri
 #Little Rock, AR %Arlington, TX

AUBURN (8-5, 5-3)

Auburn, AL
 Sept. 2 Georgia Southern
 Sept. 9 at Clemson
 Sept. 16 Mercer
 Sept. 23 at Missouri
 Sept. 30 Mississippi State
 Oct. 7 Ole Miss
 Oct. 14 at LSU
 Oct. 21 at Arkansas
 Nov. 4 at Texas A&M
 Nov. 11 Georgia
 Nov. 18 UL Monroe
 Nov. 25 Alabama

FLORIDA (9-4, 6-2)

Gainesville, FL
 Sept. 2 vs. Michigan #
 Sept. 9 Northern Colorado
 Sept. 16 Tennessee
 Sept. 23 at Kentucky
 Sept. 30 Vanderbilt
 Oct. 7 at LSU
 Oct. 14 Texas A&M
 Oct. 28 vs. Georgia %
 Nov. 4 at Missouri
 Nov. 11 at South Carolina
 Nov. 18 UAB
 Nov. 25 Florida State
 #Arlington, TX %Jacksonville, FL

GEORGIA (8-5, 4-4)

Athens, GA
 Sept. 2 Appalachian State
 Sept. 9 at Notre Dame
 Sept. 16 Samford
 Sept. 23 Mississippi State
 Sept. 30 at Tennessee
 Oct. 7 at Vanderbilt
 Oct. 14 Missouri
 Oct. 28 vs. Florida #
 Nov. 4 South Carolina
 Nov. 11 at Auburn
 Nov. 18 Kentucky
 Nov. 25 at Georgia Tech
 #Jacksonville, FL

KENTUCKY (7-6, 4-4)

Lexington, KY
 Sept. 2 at Southern Miss
 Sept. 9 Eastern Kentucky
 Sept. 16 at South Carolina
 Sept. 23 Florida
 Sept. 30 Eastern Michigan
 Oct. 7 Missouri
 Oct. 21 at Mississippi State
 Oct. 28 Tennessee
 Nov. 4 Ole Miss
 Nov. 11 at Vanderbilt
 Nov. 18 at Georgia
 Nov. 25 Louisville

LSU (8-4, 5-3)

Baton Rouge, LA
 Sept. 2 vs. BYU #
 Sept. 9 Chattanooga
 Sept. 16 at Mississippi State
 Sept. 23 Syracuse
 Sept. 30 Troy
 Oct. 7 Florida
 Oct. 14 Auburn
 Oct. 21 at Ole Miss
 Nov. 4 at Alabama
 Nov. 11 Arkansas
 Nov. 18 at Tennessee
 Nov. 25 Texas A&M
 #Houston, TX

MISSISSIPPI STATE (6-7, 3-5)

Starkville, MS
 Sept. 2 Charleston Southern
 Sept. 9 at Louisiana Tech
 Sept. 16 LSU
 Sept. 23 at Georgia
 Sept. 30 at Auburn
 Oct. 14 BYU
 Oct. 21 Kentucky
 Oct. 28 at Texas A&M
 Nov. 4 Massachusetts
 Nov. 11 Alabama
 Nov. 18 at Arkansas
 Nov. 23 Ole Miss

MISSOURI (4-8, 2-6)

Columbia, MO
 Sept. 2 Missouri State
 Sept. 9 South Carolina
 Sept. 16 Purdue
 Sept. 23 Auburn
 Oct. 7 at Kentucky
 Oct. 14 at Georgia
 Oct. 21 Idaho
 Oct. 28 at Connecticut
 Nov. 4 Florida
 Nov. 11 Tennessee
 Nov. 18 at Vanderbilt
 Nov. 25 at Arkansas

OLE MISS (5-7, 2-6)

Oxford, MS
 Sept. 2 South Alabama
 Sept. 9 Tennessee-Martin
 Sept. 16 at California
 Sept. 30 at Alabama
 Oct. 7 at Auburn
 Oct. 14 Vanderbilt
 Oct. 21 LSU
 Oct. 28 Arkansas
 Nov. 4 at Kentucky
 Nov. 11 UL Lafayette
 Nov. 18 Texas A&M
 Nov. 23 at Mississippi State

SOUTH CAROLINA (6-7, 3-5)

Columbia, SC
 Sept. 2 vs. NC State #
 Sept. 9 at Missouri
 Sept. 16 Kentucky
 Sept. 23 Louisiana Tech
 Sept. 30 at Texas A&M
 Oct. 7 Arkansas
 Oct. 14 at Tennessee
 Oct. 28 Vanderbilt
 Nov. 4 at Georgia
 Nov. 11 Florida
 Nov. 18 Wofford
 Nov. 25 Clemson
 #Charlotte, NC

TENNESSEE (9-4, 4-4)

Knoxville, TN
 Sept. 4 at Georgia Tech #
 Sept. 9 Indiana State
 Sept. 16 at Florida
 Sept. 23 Massachusetts
 Sept. 30 Georgia
 Oct. 14 South Carolina
 Oct. 21 at Alabama
 Oct. 28 at Kentucky
 Nov. 4 Southern Miss
 Nov. 11 at Missouri
 Nov. 18 LSU
 Nov. 25 Vanderbilt
 #Mercedes-Benz Stadium

TEXAS A&M (8-5, 4-4)

College Station, TX
 Sept. 3 at UCLA
 Sept. 9 Nicholls State
 Sept. 16 UL Lafayette
 Sept. 23 vs. Arkansas #
 Sept. 30 South Carolina
 Oct. 7 Alabama
 Oct. 14 at Florida
 Oct. 28 Mississippi State
 Nov. 4 Auburn
 Nov. 11 New Mexico
 Nov. 18 at Ole Miss
 Nov. 25 at LSU
 #Arlington, TX

VANDERBILT (6-7, 3-5)

Nashville, TN
 Sept. 2 at Middle Tennessee
 Sept. 9 Alabama A&M
 Sept. 16 Kansas State
 Sept. 23 Alabama
 Sept. 30 at Florida
 Oct. 7 Georgia
 Oct. 14 at Ole Miss
 Oct. 28 at South Carolina
 Nov. 4 Western Kentucky
 Nov. 11 Kentucky
 Nov. 18 Missouri
 Nov. 25 at Tennessee

**SONY MICHEL****SUN BELT****APPALACHIAN STATE (10-3, 7-1)**

Boone, NC
 Sept. 2 at Georgia
 Sept. 9 Savannah State
 Sept. 16 at Texas State
 Sept. 23 Wake Forest
 Oct. 7 New Mexico State
 Oct. 14 at Idaho
 Oct. 21 Coastal Carolina
 Oct. 28 at Massachusetts
 Nov. 4 at UL Monroe
 Nov. 9 Georgia Southern
 Nov. 25 at Georgia State
 Dec. 2 UL Lafayette

ARKANSAS STATE (8-5, 7-1)

Jonesboro, AR
 Sept. 2 at Nebraska
 Sept. 9 Miami
 Sept. 16 Arkansas-Pine Bluff
 Sept. 23 at SMU
 Oct. 4 at Georgia Southern
 Oct. 14 Coastal Carolina
 Oct. 19 UL Lafayette
 Oct. 28 at New Mexico State
 Nov. 11 at South Alabama
 Nov. 18 Texas State
 Nov. 25 at UL Monroe
 Dec. 2 Troy

COASTAL CAROLINA (10-2)

Conway, SC
 Sept. 2 Massachusetts
 Sept. 16 at UAB
 Sept. 23 Western Illinois
 Sept. 30 at UL Monroe
 Oct. 7 Georgia State
 Oct. 14 at Arkansas State
 Oct. 21 at Appalachian State
 Oct. 28 Texas State
 Nov. 4 at Arkansas
 Nov. 11 Troy
 Nov. 18 at Idaho
 Dec. 2 Georgia Southern

GEORGIA SOUTHERN (5-7, 4-4)

Statesboro, GA
 Sept. 2 at Auburn
 Sept. 9 New Hampshire
 Sept. 23 at Indiana
 Oct. 4 Arkansas State
 Oct. 14 New Mexico State
 Oct. 21 at Massachusetts
 Oct. 28 at Troy
 Nov. 4 Georgia State
 Nov. 9 at Appalachian State
 Nov. 18 South Alabama
 Nov. 25 at UL Lafayette
 Dec. 2 at Coastal Carolina

GEORGIA STATE (3-9, 2-6)

Atlanta, GA
 Aug. 31 Tennessee State
 Sept. 16 at Penn State
 Sept. 23 at Charlotte
 Sept. 30 Memphis
 Oct. 7 at Coastal Carolina
 Oct. 14 at UL Monroe
 Oct. 21 Troy
 Oct. 26 South Alabama
 Nov. 4 at Georgia Southern
 Nov. 11 at Texas State
 Nov. 25 Appalachian State
 Dec. 2 Idaho

IDAHO (9-4, 6-2)

Moscow, ID
 Aug. 31 Sacramento State
 Sept. 9 UNLV
 Sept. 16 at Western Michigan
 Sept. 23 at South Alabama
 Oct. 7 UL Lafayette
 Oct. 14 Appalachian State
 Oct. 21 at Missouri
 Oct. 28 UL Monroe
 Nov. 2 at Troy
 Nov. 18 Coastal Carolina
 Nov. 25 at New Mexico State
 Dec. 2 at Georgia State

UL LAFAYETTE (6-7, 5-3)

Lafayette, LA
 Sept. 2 SE Louisiana
 Sept. 9 at Tulsa
 Sept. 16 at Texas A&M
 Sept. 23 UL Monroe
 Oct. 7 at Idaho
 Oct. 12 Texas State
 Oct. 19 at Arkansas State
 Oct. 28 at South Alabama
 Nov. 4 at Ole Miss
 Nov. 11 New Mexico State
 Nov. 18 Georgia Southern
 Dec. 2 at Appalachian State

UL MONROE (4-8, 3-5)

Monroe, LA
 Aug. 31 at Memphis
 Sept. 9 at FSU
 Sept. 16 Southern Miss
 Sept. 23 at UL Lafayette
 Sept. 30 Coastal Carolina
 Oct. 7 at Texas State
 Oct. 14 Georgia State
 Oct. 21 at South Alabama
 Oct. 28 at Idaho
 Nov. 4 Appalachian State
 Nov. 18 at Auburn
 Nov. 25 Arkansas State

**MYLES GASKIN****NEW MEXICO STATE (3-9, 2-6)**

Las Cruces, NM
 Aug. 31 at Arizona State
 Sept. 9 at New Mexico
 Sept. 16 Troy
 Sept. 23 UTEP
 Sept. 30 at Arkansas
 Oct. 7 at Appalachian State
 Oct. 14 at Georgia Southern
 Oct. 28 Arkansas State
 Nov. 4 at Texas State
 Nov. 18 at UL Lafayette
 Nov. 25 Idaho
 Dec. 2 South Alabama

SOUTH ALABAMA (6-7, 2-6)

Mobile, AL
 Sept. 2 at Ole Miss
 Sept. 9 Oklahoma State
 Sept. 16 Alabama A&M
 Sept. 23 Idaho
 Oct. 11 at Louisiana Tech
 Oct. 21 at Troy
 Oct. 26 at Georgia State
 Nov. 4 UL Lafayette
 Nov. 11 Arkansas State
 Nov. 18 at Georgia Southern
 Dec. 2 at New Mexico State

TEXAS STATE (2-10, 0-8)

San Marcos, TX
 Sept. 2 Houston Baptist
 Sept. 9 at Colorado
 Sept. 16 Appalachian State
 Sept. 23 UTSA
 Sept. 30 at Wyoming
 Oct. 7 UL Monroe
 Oct. 12 at UL Lafayette
 Oct. 28 at Coastal Carolina
 Nov. 4 New Mexico State
 Nov. 11 Georgia State
 Nov. 18 at Arkansas State
 Nov. 25 at Troy

TROY (10-3, 6-2)

Troy, AL
 Sept. 2 at Boise State
 Sept. 9 Alabama State
 Sept. 16 at New Mexico State
 Sept. 23 Akron
 Sept. 30 at LSU
 Oct. 11 South Alabama
 Oct. 21 at Georgia State
 Oct. 28 Georgia Southern
 Nov. 2 Idaho
 Nov. 11 at Coastal Carolina
 Nov. 25 Texas State
 Dec. 2 at Arkansas State

INDEPENDENTS**ARMY (8-5)**

West Point, NY
 Sept. 1 Fordham
 Sept. 9 Buffalo
 Sept. 16 at Ohio State
 Sept. 23 at Tulane
 Sept. 30 UTEP
 Oct. 7 at Rice
 Oct. 14 Eastern Michigan
 Oct. 21 Temple
 Nov. 4 at Air Force
 Nov. 11 Duke
 Nov. 18 at North Texas
 Dec. 9 vs. Navy #
 #Philadelphia, PA

BYU (9-4)

Provo, UT
 Aug. 26 Portland State
 Sept. 2 vs. LSU #
 Sept. 9 Utah
 Sept. 16 Wisconsin
 Sept. 29 at Utah State
 Oct. 6 Boise State
 Oct. 14 at Mississippi State
 Oct. 21 at East Carolina
 Oct. 28 San Jose State
 Nov. 4 at Fresno State
 Nov. 10 at UNLV
 Nov. 18 Massachusetts
 Nov. 25 at Hawaii
 #Houston, TX

MASSACHUSETTS (2-10)

Amherst, MA
 Aug. 26 Hawaii
 Sept. 2 at Coastal Carolina
 Sept. 9 Old Dominion
 Sept. 15 at Temple
 Sept. 23 at Tennessee
 Sept. 30 Ohio
 Oct. 14 at South Florida
 Oct. 21 Georgia Southern
 Oct. 28 Appalachian State
 Nov. 4 at Mississippi State
 Nov. 11 vs. Maine #
 Nov. 18 at BYU
 #Boston, MA

NOTRE DAME (4-8)

South Bend, IN
 Sept. 2 Temple
 Sept. 9 Georgia
 Sept. 16 at Boston College
 Sept. 23 at Michigan State
 Sept. 30 Miami (Ohio)
 Oct. 7 at North Carolina
 Oct. 21 USC
 Oct. 28 NC State
 Nov. 4 Wake Forest
 Nov. 11 at Miami (Fla.)
 Nov. 18 Navy
 Nov. 25 at Stanford



NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

National Forecast: 20

Brian Kelly's overhaul of the coaching staff — six new assistants, three of whom are coordinators, and a new strength and conditioning coach — was a necessary shift following a 4-8 season.

The Irish have averaged better than 30 points per game each of the past three seasons, but the drop-off in consistency last year was significant, particularly in the red zone and with the game on the line. Seven of the eight losses were by a total of 32 points.

The defense was a disaster in 2014-15 and the first four games of 2016, prompting the firing of coordinator Brian VanGorder in September. Enter Mike Elko from Wake Forest, who did more with less than anybody in the ACC the last three seasons. The Irish will benefit greatly from an emphasis on fundamentals — an area significantly lacking under VanGorder — and a scheme that created sacks and turnovers at a high rate for the Demon Deacons.

QUARTERBACKS Gone is quarterback DeShone Kizer, who was a revelation in 2015 and inconsistent in 2016. The weight of the offense rests on sophomore Brandon Wimbush, who's thrown just five passes in two years. Experience is the only thing lacking from Wimbush's game. He's a brilliant, sturdy athlete who conjures up memories of the last Notre Dame national title (1988) with Tony Rice at quarterback. The big separator between Rice and Wimbush is the latter's ability to throw the football. He has a cannon, and accuracy was not an issue this spring. "We're not asking him to come in here and lead the entire building," Kelly says. "I'm giving him some leadership opportunities, but I'm asking him to be more focused on taking care of himself. He has a presence about him. He has confidence in himself." Redshirt freshman Ian Book has no playing experience behind Wimbush. True freshman Avery Davis is the third quarterback.

RUNNING BACKS The Irish are loaded at running back, led by junior Josh Adams, who rushed for 1,768 yards, 11 touchdowns and a 6.4-yard average in his first two years in the program. When healthy — he suffered a hamstring pull in the 2016 preseason and wasn't up to par until November — he's a breakout threat who also offers the tough yards between the tackles. "I see a young man who is a great leader and an extremely hard worker," says offensive coordinator Chip Long. "Josh is a guy that's setting the bar high. He wants to have his picture on these walls in here." Junior Dexter Williams has yet to take off, but the arrival of Long — who likes to use multiple backs — should help launch Williams' career after 64 touches from scrimmage in two seasons. Redshirt freshman Tony Jones Jr. offers size (5'11", 225) and power, shiftiness, and a threat in the passing game. "He's 225 pounds and can catch the ball coming out of the backfield," Kelly says. "He's assignment correct, can run elusively and can get into the second level."

RECEIVERS A core of long wide receivers and tight ends will lead the way in the pass-catching department with junior Equanimeous St. Brown at the forefront. After standout Will Fuller's early departure for the NFL, St. Brown emerged as Notre Dame's go-to choice, scoring two touchdowns in the season opener against Texas en route to a 58-catch, 961-yard, nine-touchdown sophomore campaign. "I see a guy who wants to be great," says Long of St. Brown. "He works as hard as he can every day and tries to master his craft. He expects to be a great player." On the cusp of similar accolades is sophomore tight end Alizé Jones. Jones missed the 2016 season to tend to academics after catching 13 passes for a 14.6-yard average in '15. Jones teams with senior tight end Durham Smythe, who caught just nine passes in '16 but scored four touchdowns. They'll be joined by junior Nic Weishar and highly touted freshman Brock Wright to form one of the top tight end corps in the country. Sophomores Chase Claypool and Miles Boykin are inexperienced but offer length and athleticism. Claypool was a demon on Notre Dame's coverage units on special teams as a rookie. A key for the Irish is sophomore Kevin Stepherson, who caught 25 passes for 462 yards and five touchdowns in '16. C.J. Sanders and Chris Finke are also options. They combined for 34 receptions (24 by Sanders) and four touchdowns in '16.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Despite the return of a highly touted left side of the offensive line — tackle Mike McGlinchey and guard Quenton Nelson — Notre Dame's unit struggled as a whole in '16, due largely to the loss of first-round NFL Draft pick Ronnie Stanley and second-rounder Nick Martin. Last

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Sept. 2 | Temple |
| Sept. 9 | Georgia |
| Sept. 16 | at Boston College |
| Sept. 23 | at Michigan State |
| Sept. 30 | Miami (Ohio) |
| Oct. 7 | at North Carolina |
| Oct. 21 | USC |
| Oct. 28 | NC State |
| Nov. 4 | Wake Forest |
| Nov. 11 | at Miami (Fla.) |
| Nov. 18 | Navy |
| Nov. 25 | at Stanford |

KEY IRISH

JOSH ADAMS, RB Adams came on strong in November to finish last season with 933 yards and 5.9 yards per carry.

MIKE MCGLINCHY, LT McGlinchey joins guard Quenton Nelson in forming a formidable left side of the O-line.

EQUANIMEOUS ST. BROWN, WR As a sophomore, St. Brown caught 58 passes for 961 yards and nine TDs. He'll get more help but remains the go-to guy.

KEY LOSSES

DESHONE KIZER, QB Kizer's numbers dwindled last year after a standout receiving corps departed.

JAMES ONWUALU, OLB The former wide receiver needed a few years before he adapted to defense. He was a force off the edge with a team-leading 11.5 tackles for a loss in '16.

ISAAC ROCHELL, DL The stats didn't capture the versatile defensive end/tackle's value up front. He was the rock of Notre Dame's shaky defense.

RIISING STAR

Alizé Jones was poised for a breakout 2016 season following his noteworthy freshman year in which he caught 13 passes for 190 yards, including a 45-yarder that set up the game-winning TD at Temple. Academics sidelined him in 2016, but the part-tight end, part-wide receiver is a matchup nightmare.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 8-4

Last year's disappointing four-win season didn't go over well in South Bend, but Notre Dame is in better shape than its record suggested. After losing seven of their games by eight points or fewer, the Irish will look to 15 returning starters and two new coordinators to help them return to the top 25. Quarterback Brandon Wimbush is poised for a breakout year, and the first-year starter is surrounded by a standout offensive line and deep stable of running backs. The defense has been a source of concern over the last few seasons. New coordinator Mike Elko should help this unit take a step forward, but developing a pass rush and stopping the run could still be issues. A schedule featuring 11 bowl teams doesn't provide many breaks for Kelly and a team in transition. **Postseason: Camping World Bowl vs. Oklahoma State**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

ON THE OFFENSIVE The arrival of offensive coordinator Chip Long begs the question: Will it be Long's offense or Brian Kelly's? "We're going to win (this) year, Chip's going to be the greatest offensive coordinator in the country, and he's going to get a head coaching job, right?" Kelly says. "The culture of the offense is still the base offense that I've always run." Long's fingerprints, however, will be all over the offense, particularly as it pertains to tempo. "I'm not going to go fast and lose us a game," Long says. "I have the ability to slow it down with shifts, motions, different cadences. I never want (the offense) thinking I'm trying to slow it down so it gets them out of their rhythm."

GO FOR IT Sophomore QB Brandon Wimbush won't have to look over his shoulder this fall. "If he throws an interception, he doesn't have to hang his head," Kelly says. "He does so many good things that he can have confidence that he's going to be successful."

SIMPLICITY The beauty of Mike Elko's defense is its simplicity that creates productivity. "[Elko] was like, 'Relax. You're going to learn it. It's not that hard. Just keep your head on straight and everything will be fine,'" says linebacker Nyles Morgan of his first meeting with Elko. "Things are said and done a certain way and it won't change. Every defense has adjustments, but the adjustments aren't complicated."

SPECIAL DELIVERY Brian Polian spent five seasons on Charlie Weis' Notre Dame staff (2005-09). After stints at Stanford and Texas A&M, he's back at Notre Dame after four years as head coach at Nevada. Polian has been tasked with turning around a punt coverage unit that ranked 123rd nationally and the 96th-rated kick coverage unit. "I haven't concerned myself with what happened before. I wasn't here," he says. "It's about fundamentals and identifying personnel."

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Brian Kelly

RECORD AT SCHOOL

59-31 (7 years)

CAREER RECORD

230-88-2 (26 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Chip Long

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Mike Elko

LOCATION

South Bend, IN

STADIUM

Notre Dame Stadium (78,000)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



RB **JOSH ADAMS**



year's inexperienced offensive line has given way to a more seasoned unit in 2017. Sam Mustipher should be a more consistent center this season after his first year as a starter in '16. Alex Bars shifts inside to right guard, where his size should be an asset. Two highly touted four-star prospects — Tommy Kraemer and Liam Eichenberg — will battle it out for the starting right tackle slot in their redshirt freshman seasons.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Difference makers up front always are difficult to land, and Notre Dame has yet to replicate the collection of talent from the 2012 defensive line that featured Stephon Tuitt, Louis Nix III and Kapron Lewis-Moore. In 2015-16, the Irish got production from Sheldon Day, Romeo Okwara, Isaac Rochell and Jarron Jones. Now all four are gone, and the Irish are desperately searching for answers.

Or are they? "We have a lot more on the defensive line than many people think," Kelly says. Tackle Jerry Tillery and end Jay Hayes are two of the oldest of the group, but neither has been overly productive. Sophomore Daelin Hayes, no relation to Jay, possesses pass-rushing ability and figures to get the nod at rush end, although injuries throughout high school make him an unknown over the long haul. Junior Jonathan Bonner and senior Daniel Cage give the Irish a couple of older players between the ends. Senior end Andrew Trumbetti has played a lot but has yet to make a breakthrough.

LINEBACKERS Notre Dame boasts experience, talent and depth across the board at Buck and Mike linebacker, and at Rover, which is a combination strong safety/outside linebacker in Elko's scheme. Seniors Nyles Morgan, who paced the Irish in tackles (94) and sacks (4.0), and Greer Martini, a Swiss army knife throughout the linebacker corps during his career, are leaders of the defense. "(Morgan and Martini) are both alpha guys for us, kind of patrolling things," says linebackers coach Clark Lea. "Those guys are an extension of me." Although the Rover position is new to the Irish, junior Drue Tranquill, who moves up from safety, and sophomore Asmar Bilal fit what Elko is looking

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

| | | | | |
|----|----|-----------------------------|----|------------------------|
| WR | 6 | Equanimeous St. Brown (Jr.) | 3 | C.J. Sanders (Jr.) |
| WR | 83 | Chase Claypool (So.) | 29 | Kevin Stepherson (So.) |
| LT | 68 | Mike McGlinchey (Sr.) | 72 | Robert Hainsey (Fr.) |
| LG | 56 | Quenton Nelson (Jr.) | 70 | Hunter Bivin (Sr.) |
| C | 53 | Sam Mustipher (Jr.) | 66 | Tristen Hoge (So.) |
| RG | 71 | Alex Bars (Jr.) | 57 | Trevor Ruhland (So.) |
| RT | 78 | Tommy Kraemer (Fr.) | 74 | Liam Eichenberg (Fr.) |
| TE | 80 | Durham Smythe (Sr.) | 82 | Nic Weishar (Jr.) |
| TE | 10 | Alizé Jones (So.) | 89 | Brock Wright (Fr.) |
| QB | 7 | Brandon Wimbush (So.) | 12 | Ian Book (Fr.) |
| RB | 33 | Josh Adams (Jr.) | 2 | Dexter Williams (Jr.) |

DEFENSE (7)

| | | | | |
|-----|----|-----------------------|----|------------------------|
| DE | 93 | Jay Hayes (Sr.) | 98 | Andrew Trumbetti (Sr.) |
| NT | 99 | Jerry Tillery (Jr.) | 75 | Daniel Cage (Sr.) |
| DT | 55 | Jonathan Bonner (Jr.) | 58 | Elijah Taylor (So.) |
| DE | 9 | Daelin Hayes (So.) | 42 | Julian Okwara (So.) |
| MLB | 5 | Nyles Morgan (Sr.) | 45 | Jonathan Jones (Fr.) |
| WLB | 48 | Greer Martini (Sr.) | 4 | Te'von Coney (Jr.) |
| ROV | 23 | Drue Tranquill (Jr.) | 22 | Asmar Bilal (So.) |
| CB | 20 | Shaun Crawford (So.) | 7 | Nick Watkins (Jr.) |
| CB | 27 | Julian Love (So.) | 35 | Donte Vaughn (So.) |
| FS | 24 | Nick Coleman (Jr.) | 28 | Nicco Ferritta (Jr.) |
| SS | 21 | Jalen Elliott (So.) | 14 | Devin Studstill (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | | | |
|---|----|---------------------|----|---|--------------------|
| K | 19 | Justin Yoon (Jr.) | KR | 3 | C.J. Sanders (Jr.) |
| P | 85 | Tyler Newsome (Jr.) | PR | 3 | C.J. Sanders (Jr.) |

for at the position. Both should provide pass rush and versatility against the run.

DEFENSIVE BACKS An influx of talent in last year's freshman class — coupled with the return from injury of Shaun Crawford and Nick Watkins — makes this one of the deepest positions on the Irish roster. Sophomores Julian Love, Donte Vaughn and Troy Pride Jr. saw extensive action as rookies in 2016. Love, in particular, has emerged as a talented defender of the pass and a physical run defender. The safety positions have young talent as well, but it's not as far along as the cornerback corps. Junior Nick Coleman, a converted cornerback who struggled last September before giving way to the freshmen, takes over at free safety. Sophomores Devin Studstill and Jalen Elliott — both of whom played fairly extensively in '16 — will battle it out for playing time.

SPECIALISTS Placekicker Justin Yoon and punter Tyler Newsome put up big numbers in 2015-16. Yoon is 28-of-34 on field goals, and Newsome posted 44.5- and 43.5-yard averages, respectively, the last two seasons. Sanders averaged 12.5 yards on punt returns last year and had a 25.0-yard average on kick returns, including two touchdowns.

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 30.1 | 58 |
| DEFENSE | 28.7 | 47 |
| MARGIN | +1.4 | 53 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| OFFENSE | 43.5% | 32 |
| DEFENSE | 41.3% | 70 |
| MARGIN | +2.2% | 50 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 6.1 | 43 |
| DEFENSE | 5.4 | 45 |
| MARGIN | +0.7 | 35 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.8 | 34 |
| DEFENSE | 4.2 | 41 |
| MARGIN | +0.6 | 27 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 0.7 | 65 |
| DEFENSE | -4 | 90 |
| MARGIN | -4.7 | [99] |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-0.8 Notre Dame's average distance to go on third down was 7.4 yards, 98th in FBS. The defense forced an average third down distance of just 6.6 yards, 107th. That margin of -0.8 yards was among the 20 worst in college football.

1-7 From 2012-15, Notre Dame went 17-7 in games decided by one possession. In 2016, however, the Fighting Irish went an incredible 1-7 in one-possession games. What should have been a 6-6 or 7-5 team actually went 4-8.

5.6 Under the guidance of new Notre Dame offensive coordinator Chip Long, Memphis' offense averaged 6.3 gains per game of 20-plus yards. Notre Dame averaged 5.6. In a season marked by close losses, one extra big play per game could have come in handy.

Scouting the FIGHTING IRISH

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP NOTRE DAME

"You'll have a lot of first-year hires coaching to save their boss' job. Offensively it's Brian Kelly's show, but there's a lot of debate if that's the right move going forward. When they're good Kelly has a staff that blends with him well. When he struggles, the staff is not on the same page. The players don't play with confidence, and he gets frustrated. You could see that disconnect with their defense especially. ... Mike Elko is a great hire for them. Just blow up the 4-3 [Brian] VanGorder ran and show new looks in Week 1. ... We haven't seen Notre Dame dominate recruiting like some think they still should, but this was a good football team in bad situations last season. They've been changing their message up on the recruiting trail to compensate. ... The fallout from 2017 is now you're installing new schemes on both sides and asking the kid [Brandon Wimbush] to be a first-year savior. ... Things got stale last season. From the outside it looked a lot like a NFL attitude on their sideline for the last couple seasons. That can't work with 18-year-olds. Their systems broke down, but they're not broken."

2017 NOTRE DAME ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|
| 12 Book, Ian | 6-0/205 | Fr. | El Dorado Hills, CA |
| 17 Henry, Nolan | 6-0/195 | Jr. | Vancouver, WA |
| 4 VanGorder, Montgomery | 6-1/217 | Jr. | Buford, GA |
| 7 Wimbush, Brandon | 6-2/226 | So. | Teaneck, NJ |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 33 Adams, Josh | 6-2/220 | Jr. | Warrington, PA |
| 15 Holmes, C.J. | 6-0/206 | Fr. | Hamden, CT |
| 34 Jones Jr., Tony | 5-11/225 | Fr. | St. Petersburg, FL |
| 40 Segobiano, Brett | 6-0/201 | So. | Bloomington, IL |
| 2 Williams, Dexter | 5-11/202 | Jr. | Winter Garden, FL |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 24 Assaf, Mick | 5-11/202 | So. | Atlanta, GA |
| 81 Boykin, Miles | 6-4/225 | So. | Tinley Park, IL |
| 87 Centivire, Keenan | 6-6/227 | Jr. | Fort Wayne, IN |
| 83 Claypool, Chase | 6-4/224 | So. | Abbotsford, BC |
| 10 Finke, Chris | 5-10/177 | So. | Kettering, OH |
| 35 Hammann, Grant | 6-0/183 | Jr. | Dyersville, IA |
| 38 McIntosh, Deon | 5-11/190 | Fr. | Pompano Beach, FL |
| 88 McKinley, Javon | 6-2/220 | So. | Corona, CA |
| 3 Sanders, C.J. | 5-8/185 | Jr. | Granada Hills, CA |
| 85 Shinaver, Arion | 6-1/181 | So. | Noblesville, IN |
| 6 St. Brown, Equanimeous | 6-5/204 | Jr. | Anaheim, CA |
| 29 Stepherson, Kevin | 6-0/180 | So. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 26 Webster, Austin | 5-11/191 | Jr. | Beverly Hills, CA |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 10 Jones, Alizé | 6-5/245 | Jr. | Las Vegas, NV |
| 13 Luatua, Tyler | 6-3/260 | Sr. | Paramount, CA |
| 80 Smythe, Durham | 6-6/256 | Sr. | Belton, TX |
| 82 Weishar, Nic | 6-5/242 | Jr. | Midlothian, IL |
| 89 Wright, Brock | 6-5/252 | Fr. | Cypress, TX |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 69 Banks, Aaron | 6-6/310 | Fr. | Alameda, CA |
| 71 Bars, Alex | 6-6/320 | Jr. | Nashville, TN |
| 70 Bivin, Hunter | 6-6/318 | Sr. | Owensboro, KY |
| 50 Boudreaux, Parker | 6-4/288 | Fr. | Winter Garden, FL |
| 63 Bush, Sam | 6-4/302 | Jr. | Newport Beach, CA |
| 67 Byrne, Jimmy | 6-4/294 | Jr. | Cleveland, OH |
| 74 Eichenberg, Liam | 6-6/294 | Fr. | Cleveland, OH |
| 72 Hainsey, Robert | 6-5/292 | Fr. | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 66 Hoge, Tristen | 6-5/303 | So. | Pocatello, ID |
| 78 Kraemer, Tommy | 6-6/313 | Fr. | Cincinnati, OH |
| 68 McGinchey, Mike | 6-8/312 | Sr. | Philadelphia, PA |
| 53 Mustipher, Sam | 6-3/305 | Jr. | Olney, MD |
| 56 Nelson, Quenton | 6-5/329 | Jr. | Holmdel, NJ |
| 62 Plantz, Logan | 6-2/289 | Jr. | Frankfort, IL |
| 57 Ruhland, Trevor | 6-4/303 | So. | Cary, IL |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 55 Bonner, Jonathan | 6-4/284 | Jr. | Chesterfield, MO |
| 75 Cage, Daniel | 6-1/329 | Sr. | Cincinnati, OH |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---------|-----|------------------------|
| 97 Dew-Treadway, Micah | 6-4/299 | So. | Bolingbrook, IL |
| 54 Feist, Lincoln | 6-3/329 | Jr. | Rapid City, SD |
| 9 Hayes, Daelin | 6-4/255 | So. | Belleville, MI |
| 93 Hayes, Jay | 6-4/281 | Jr. | Brooklyn, NY |
| 53 Kareem, Khalid | 6-4/267 | So. | Pontiac, MI |
| 64 Kilander, Ryan | 6-1/304 | Jr. | R. Santa Margarita, CA |
| 96 Mokwush, Pete | 6-4/326 | Jr. | Staten Island, NY |
| 91 Ogundeji, Adetokunbo | 6-4/251 | Fr. | West Bloomfield, MI |
| 42 Okwara, Julian | 6-5/235 | So. | Charlotte, NC |
| 58 Taylor, Elijah | 6-3/280 | So. | Cincinnati, OH |
| 77 Tiassum, Brandon | 6-4/304 | So. | Indianapolis, IN |
| 99 Tillery, Jerry | 6-7/308 | Jr. | Shreveport, LA |
| 98 Trumbetti, Andrew | 6-4/252 | Sr. | Demarest, NJ |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|---------|-----|------------------------|
| 30 Barajas, Josh | 6-2/239 | So. | Valparaiso, IN |
| 22 Bilal, Asmar | 6-2/229 | So. | Indianapolis, IN |
| 4 Coney, Te'von | 6-1/235 | Jr. | Palm Beach Gardens, FL |
| 49 Hutson, Brandon | 6-3/237 | Jr. | Battle Creek, MI |
| 44 Jones, Jamir | 6-3/243 | So. | Rochester, NY |
| 45 Jones, Jonathan | 6-0/227 | Fr. | Ocoee, FL |
| 48 Martini, Greer | 6-4/240 | Sr. | Cary, NC |
| 5 Morgan, Nyles | 6-1/238 | Sr. | Crete, IL |
| 40 Murphy, Kier | 6-2/225 | Jr. | Rock Island, IL |
| 37 Regan, Robert | 6-2/203 | Jr. | Darien, IL |
| 51 Spruell, Devyn | 6-2/231 | Jr. | Warren, NJ |
| 41 Thompson, Jimmy | 6-0/216 | Jr. | Hinsdale, IL |
| 23 Tranquill, Drue | 6-2/230 | Jr. | Fort Wayne, IN |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 41 Agoro, Temitope | 6-0/198 | So. | Riverdale, MD |
| 43 Ball, Brian | 5-10/193 | So. | Indianapolis, IN |
| 24 Coleman, Nick | 6-0/187 | Jr. | Dayton, OH |
| 20 Crawford, Shaun | 5-9/175 | So. | Lakewood, OH |
| 21 Elliott, Jalen | 6-1/208 | So. | Richmond, VA |
| 28 Fertitta, Nicco | 5-9/179 | Jr. | Las Vegas, NV |
| 27 Love, Julian | 5-11/190 | So. | Westchester, IL |
| 32 Morgan, D.J. | 6-2/208 | Fr. | Norwalk, CA |
| 31 Perry, Spencer | 6-2/209 | So. | Newman, GA |
| 18 Pride Jr., Troy | 6-0/183 | So. | Greer, SC |
| 17 Robertson, Isaiah | 6-2/208 | Fr. | Bolingbrook, IL |
| 38 Schilling, Christopher | 5-11/217 | So. | Overland Park, KS |
| 14 Studstill, Devin | 6-0/198 | So. | Riviera Beach, FL |
| 35 Vaughn, Donte | 6-3/209 | So. | Memphis, TN |
| 7 Watkins, Nick | 6-1/203 | Jr. | DeSoto, TX |
| 26 White, Ashton | 5-10/197 | So. | Clinton, MD |

| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|----------|-----|-----------------|
| 29 Kohler, Sam (K) | 6-0/189 | Jr. | Lincoln, NE |
| 85 Newsome, Tyler (P) | 6-3/207 | Jr. | Carrollton, GA |
| 42 Riney, Jeff (P) | 5-11/180 | Jr. | Katy, TX |
| 54 Shannon, John (LS) | 6-2/235 | Fr. | Lake Forest, IL |
| 19 Yoon, Justin (K) | 5-10/195 | Jr. | Nashville, TN |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8

| | | | |
|----------|----------------|--------|-------|
| Sept. 4 | at Texas | (ot) L | 47-50 |
| Sept. 10 | Nevada | W | 39-10 |
| Sept. 17 | Michigan State | L | 28-36 |
| Sept. 24 | Duke | L | 35-38 |
| Oct. 1 | vs. Syracuse # | W | 50-33 |
| Oct. 8 | at NC State | L | 3-10 |
| Oct. 15 | Stanford | L | 10-17 |
| Oct. 29 | Miami | W | 30-27 |
| Nov. 5 | vs. Navy % | L | 27-28 |
| Nov. 12 | vs. Army & | W | 44-6 |
| Nov. 19 | Virginia Tech | L | 31-34 |
| Nov. 26 | at USC | L | 27-45 |

#East Rutherford %Jacksonville &San Antonio



2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | COMP | YDS | TD | INT |
|-----------------------|-----|------|-------|----|-----|
| DeShone Kizer | 361 | 212 | 2,925 | 26 | 9 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Josh Adams | 158 | 933 | 5.9 | 5 | |
| DeShone Kizer | 129 | 472 | 3.7 | 8 | |
| Tarean Folston | 77 | 334 | 4.3 | 2 | |
| Dexter Williams | 39 | 200 | 5.1 | 3 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Equanimeous St. Brown | 58 | 961 | 16.6 | 9 | |
| Torii Hunter Jr. | 38 | 521 | 13.7 | 3 | |
| Kevin Stepherson | 25 | 462 | 18.5 | 5 | |
| C.J. Sanders | 24 | 293 | 12.2 | 2 | |

KICKING: Justin Yoon, 13-17 FGs, 44-46 PATs, 83 points

TACKLES: Nyles Morgan, 94; Drue Tranquill, 79

SACKS: Nyles Morgan, 4.0

INTERCEPTIONS: Cole Luke, 2

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Scoring | 30.9 ppg | 53 |
| Rushing | 163.3 ypg | 80 |
| Passing | 254.3 ypg | 48 |
| Total | 417.6 ypg | 62 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 27.8 ppg | 62 |
| Rushing | 182.4 ypg | 72 |
| Passing | 196.4 ypg | 21 |
| Total | 378.8 ypg | 42 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | NATIONAL |
| -4 | -0.33 | 93 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|----------------------|----|----------|------------------|
| David Adams | LB | 6-1/222 | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Jafar Armstrong | WR | 6-0/170 | Lee's Summit, MO |
| Aaron Banks | OL | 6-5/320 | Alameda, CA |
| Avery Davis | QB | 5-11/185 | Cedar Hill, TX |
| Jonathan Doerer | K | 6-3/188 | Charlotte, NC |
| Darnell Ewell | DL | 6-4/280 | Norfolk, VA |
| Jordan Genmark Heath | S | 6-2/200 | San Diego, CA |
| Dylan Gibbons | OL | 6-4/315 | Clearwater, FL |
| Robert Hainsey | OL | 6-4/275 | Monroeville, PA |
| Kurt Hinish | DL | 6-2/280 | Pittsburgh, PA |
| C.J. Holmes | RB | 6-0/200 | Hamden, CT |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----|----------|---------------------|
| Cole Kmet | TE | 6-4/235 | Lake Barrington, IL |
| Josh Lugg | OL | 6-6/280 | Wexford, PA |
| Jonathon MacCollister | DL | 6-3/244 | DeLand, FL |
| Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah | LB | 6-2/205 | Hampton, VA |
| Isaiah Robertson | S | 6-1/195 | Bolingbrook, IL |
| Myron Tagovailoa-Amosa | DL | 6-4/250 | Ewa Beach, HI |
| Kofi Wardlow | DL | 6-3/210 | Washington, DC |
| Drew White | LB | 6-1/220 | Boca Raton, FL |
| Brock Wright | TE | 6-5/245 | Cypress, TX |
| Michael Young Jr. | WR | 5-10/170 | Saint Rose, LA |

Notre Dame bolstered its defensive front with Darnell Ewell, a strong, tough-as-nails interior lineman, and Myron Tagovailoa-Amosa, an inside-outside option, along with tackle Kurt Hinish. The Irish can always count on a strong influx of offensive linemen, led in this class by tackle Josh Lugg. Few teams in the country can boast a better one-two punch at tight end than Brock Wright and Cole Kmet. Defensive coordinator Mike Elko sees a perfect fit for his hybrid Rover position in late recruiting catch Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah. Notre Dame has plenty of young talent at safety. Adding to that mix is Isaiah Robertson, who offers length and range. Drew White may be a bit undersized at linebacker, but he's a bullet off the snap and an off-the-edge pass-rushing threat. In C.J. Holmes, the Irish believe they have a running threat with the ability to align wide in the passing game.

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ACC

PREVIEW



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PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH
ATLANTIC
1 FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES
12-1, 8-0 ACC


Schedule Notes: The Notes' slate is book-ended by games against the 2016 SEC West (Alabama) and SEC East (Florida) champs. They visit Clemson on Nov. 11.

2 CLEMSON TIGERS
10-2, 6-2 ACC


Schedule Notes: The big one is at home vs. FSU in November, but the Tigers have a tricky September — Auburn at home plus trips to Louisville and Virginia Tech.

3 LOUISVILLE CARDINALS
9-3, 5-3 ACC


Schedule Notes: The Cards catch a break in crossover games, with rebuilding North Carolina and Virginia on the schedule. They open with Purdue in Indianapolis.

COASTAL
1 MIAMI HURRICANES
9-4, 5-3 ACC


Schedule Notes: The Canes travel to Florida State for a huge test on Sept. 16. They also have two tough non-conference home games: Toledo and Notre Dame.

2 VIRGINIA TECH HOKIES
9-3, 5-3 ACC


Schedule Notes: The Hokies host Clemson and travel to Boston College in crossover games. The opener against West Virginia in Landover, Md., is intriguing.

3 PITTSBURGH PANTHERS
7-5, 5-3 ACC


Schedule Notes: The non-conference slate is tough (at Penn State, vs. Oklahoma State), but Pitt does not play Florida State, Clemson or Louisville.

GAMES TO WATCH
SEPT. 2
FLORIDA STATE VS. ALABAMA

A Florida State win in Atlanta would be a huge boost in the ACC's quest to pass the SEC on the conference food chain — if it hasn't done so already.

SEPT. 9
AUBURN AT CLEMSON

Clemson's defense will face a tough test from a potent Auburn offense that will feature Jarrett Stidham at quarterback and Kamryn Pettway running the ball.

SEPT. 9
PITTSBURGH AT PENN STATE

Pat Narduzzi won over the fan base by beating the hated Nittany Lions in 2016. Completing a two-game sweep would be huge for Pitt — and the ACC.

SEPT. 16
CLEMSON AT LOUISVILLE

The Tigers have won all three meetings by six points or fewer since the Cardinals joined the ACC. This game should set the tone in the Atlantic Division race.

SEPT. 16
MIAMI AT FLORIDA STATE

This matchup has taken place in exactly zero ACC title games, a shocking reminder of how far Miami has fallen. But it could provide a championship preview this year.

SEPT. 30
CLEMSON AT VIRGINIA TECH

The Tigers continue their brutal opening-month schedule with a rematch of last season's ACC Championship Game, which Clemson won 42-35.

ACC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME: FLORIDA STATE OVER MIAMI

4 NC STATE WOLFPACK
7-5, 4-4 ACC



Schedule Notes: The Pack leave the state only one time until mid-October. The opener vs. South Carolina in Charlotte will serve as a nice barometer.

5 WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS
6-6, 3-5 ACC



Schedule Notes: Upset alert: The Deacons visit App State on Sept. 23. The crossover games are against Georgia Tech and Duke. They also play at Notre Dame.

6 SYRACUSE ORANGE
5-7, 2-6 ACC



Schedule Notes: It's brutal. In addition to LSU and a solid Middle Tennessee team in non-conference action, the Orange play Pitt and Miami from the Coastal.

7 BOSTON COLLEGE EAGLES
5-7, 2-6 ACC



Schedule Notes: The non-conference slate doesn't have one gimme: at Northern Illinois, Notre Dame, Central Michigan and UConn (at Fenway Park).

ATLANTIC

4 GEORGIA TECH YELLOW JACKETS
7-5, 4-4 ACC



Schedule Notes: The Jackets play two SEC East teams (Tennessee and Georgia) and also visit improving UCF. Wake Forest and Clemson are the crossover games.

5 NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS
7-5, 4-4 ACC



Schedule Notes: The Tar Heels avoid both Florida State and Clemson, but they do play Louisville and NC State — both very good teams from the Atlantic.

6 DUKE BLUE DEVILS
4-8, 2-6 ACC



Schedule Notes: The Devils have two interesting non-conference home games in September: Northwestern and Baylor. They play Florida State but miss Clemson.

7 VIRGINIA CAVALIERS
3-9, 1-7 ACC



Schedule Notes: The Cavs catch a break by not playing either Florida State or Clemson. Indiana and a trip to Boise State will be tough non-conference games.

COASTAL

OCT. 5 LOUISVILLE AT NC STATE

The Wolfpack have lost 12 straight games to Clemson, Florida State and Louisville, but this Thursday night home game provides a prime opportunity for a breakout.

OCT. 12 GEORGIA TECH AT MIAMI

Paul Johnson has led the Yellow Jackets to at least one road win against every ACC team that he has coached against on the road — except Miami.

OCT. 21 LOUISVILLE AT FLORIDA STATE

Can Deondre Francois outduel Lamar Jackson? The Noles figure to be excited for this one after suffering a 63-20 beatdown at Louisville last September.

NOV. 4 VIRGINIA TECH AT MIAMI

The Hurricanes have won three of the last five meetings, but the Hokies prevailed last season in a game that ended up sending Virginia Tech to the ACC title game.

NOV. 11 FLORIDA STATE AT CLEMSON

The teams have combined to win the Atlantic Division each of the last nine years, and the winner of this game has claimed the ACC championship six years in a row.

NOV. 11 VIRGINIA TECH AT GEORGIA TECH

The Coastal always seems wide open, but the Hokies and Yellow Jackets have combined for 10 appearances in the 12-year history of the ACC Championship Game.

ACC NOTEBOOK

COASTAL CONFUSION While the Atlantic Division figures to remain strong, especially in the top half, the Coastal Division picture is as fuzzy as ever. The division has become predictable over the years for being unpredictable — the media's preseason pick to win the Coastal has failed to reach the ACC Championship Game in each of the last five years. This season could be more of the same. Each of the top five finishers in the Coastal from 2016 must replace its starting quarterback, adding even more uncertainty to a mix of teams that has produced a different champion in each of the last four seasons.

With Mark Richt entering his second season at Miami, the Hurricanes are a trendy pick to claim the division crown in 2017. Amazingly, Miami still has not played in the ACC Championship Game since it joined the conference in 2004. The Hurricanes were picked in the preseason poll to finish first in the Coastal Division in 2014, 2013, and 2006, but they finished tied for fifth, tied for second, and fourth, respectively, in those years.

BUCK OF THE IRISH Notre Dame is a quarter of the way through its 12-year agreement to join the ACC as a partial member in football. The Fighting Irish, who are scheduled to play an average of five games per season against ACC competition through 2025, have compiled a 9-6 record against ACC foes through the first three years of the pact.

Unsurprisingly, Notre Dame has provided a nice attendance boost to the teams it has visited. All five true road games that the Fighting Irish played against ACC competition over the last three years resulted in a home crowd that was above average for the host team in that season. In three of those five games, the attendance for the Notre Dame game was the highest or tied for the highest that the host team enjoyed all year. The impact of the Fighting Irish's national brand was especially evident in 2015 during trips to Virginia and Pittsburgh. The game at Virginia produced a crowd of 58,200, up from an average of 40,799 for the Cavaliers' other six home games that season. The game at Pittsburgh produced a crowd of 68,400, up from an average of 44,100 for the Panthers' other five home games that season.

The Fighting Irish play three road games against ACC opponents this season: at Boston College (Sept. 16), at North Carolina (Oct. 7) and at Miami (Nov. 11). They welcome NC State (Oct. 28), and Wake Forest (Nov. 4) to Notre Dame Stadium.

DEFENSE IN DEPTH The ACC enjoyed a breakthrough season a year ago thanks to some star-studded offenses loaded with talent and experience at the skill positions. The strength of the league this year might be in the guys who chase those players.

Heisman Trophy winner Lamar Jackson returns at quarterback for Louisville, but the ACC's top five performers in pass efficiency from last season departed. The same is true for eight of the league's top-10 rushers. Meanwhile, the conference returns

its top-eight tacklers (in tackles per game) from a year ago, and 15 of its top 20. That group of players, led by Virginia's Micah Kiser and Quin Blanding, is all linebackers and defensive backs. The bad news for ACC teams revamping their offenses in 2017 is that the league is even stronger up front on the defensive line than it is in the back seven.

Clemson figures to have perhaps the top defensive line in the country, led by disruptive forces Christian Wilkins, Dexter Lawrence and Clelin Ferrell. Miami, with Joe Jackson and its entire two-deep returning up front, won't be far behind. The same could be said for Florida State, which has the pleasure of relying on Brian Burns, Josh Sweat and Derrick Nnadi to replace the production of departed ACC Defensive Player of the Year DeMarcus Walker. NC State welcomes back its entire starting line, including end Bradley Chubb (21.5 tackles for a loss, 10.5 sacks in 2016). Harold Landry, who had a league-high 16.5 sacks last season, and emerging pass rusher Zach Allen return for Boston College. Led by Duke Ejiofor (10.5 sacks), Wake Forest returns seven of the top eight linemen from its final two-deep a year ago. Even North Carolina, whose play along the defensive line has been mostly atrocious in recent years, brings back 11 of its 13 linemen who made at least one tackle last year.

The impact of the ACC's powerful defensive lines is worth watching in 2017. Seven ACC teams averaged at least 28 points per game in conference play a year ago, and six of those squads will have a new starting quarterback this season. That could be a recipe for lower point totals and higher turnover and sack figures.

IRREGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAMMING Georgia Tech coach Paul Johnson is unhappy with the ACC schedule — with good reason. For the second year in a row, the Yellow Jackets are playing three conference games against teams coming off open dates. For comparison's sake, Boston College, Clemson, Louisville, Syracuse, Wake Forest and Virginia Tech don't have a single conference game against a team coming off a bye week. Amazingly, this year's setup for Georgia Tech is an improvement over last year's debacle. In 2016, the Yellow Jackets had to play three divisional opponents who had an open date the week before.

Other tidbits from the 2017 schedule:

- No one can blame Boston College if it limps into its Nov. 4 open date. The Eagles will have played Notre Dame, Clemson, Virginia Tech, Louisville and Florida State in a seven-week stretch.
- Pittsburgh is the only ACC team with no games against Clemson, Florida State and Louisville.
- Syracuse has a five-game stretch in which it must face Clemson, Miami, Florida State and Louisville.
- Wake Forest is the only team in the conference that must face Florida State and Clemson in back-to-back weeks. Those divisional games lead off a brutal five-game stretch in which the Demon Deacons also face Georgia Tech, Louisville and Notre Dame.

RECRUITING: TOP 30 ACC SIGNEES

1. Cam Akers, Florida State
RB, 5-11, 213 Clinton (Clinton, MS)
2. Marvin Wilson, Florida State
DT, 6-4, 329 Episcopal (Bellaire, TX)
3. Joshua Kaindoh, Florida State
DE, 6-6, 250 IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL)
4. Tee Higgins, Clemson
WR, 6-5, 188 Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge, TN)
5. Khalan Laborn, Florida State
RB, 5-10, 199 Bishop Sullivan Catholic (Virginia Beach, VA)
6. Hunter Johnson, Clemson
QB, 6-2, 201 Brownsburg (Brownsburg, IN)
7. Stanford Samuels, Florida State
CB, 6-2, 175 Charles W. Flanagan (Hollywood, FL)
8. Jeff Thomas, Miami
WR, 5-10, 175 East St. Louis (East St. Louis, IL)
9. Devon Hunter, Virginia Tech
S, 6-1, 205 Indian River (Chesapeake, VA)
10. D.J. Matthews, Florida State
WR, 5-11, 160 Trinity Christian (Jacksonville, FL)
11. Paris Ford, Pittsburgh
S, 6-1, 180 Steel Valley (Pittsburgh, PA)
12. A.J. Terrell, Clemson
CB, 6-2, 180 Westlake (Atlanta, GA)
13. Navaughn Donaldson, Miami
OT, 6-6, 335 Miami Central (Miami, FL)
14. D.J. Johnson, Miami
DE, 6-5, 240 Luther Burbank (Sacramento, CA)
15. Cyrus Fagan, Florida State
S, 6-2, 182 Mainland (Daytona Beach, FL)
16. Hamsah Nasirildeen, Florida State
S, 6-3, 210 Concord (Concord, NC)
17. Amari Rodgers, Clemson
WR, 5-10, 221 Knoxville Catholic (Knoxville, TN)
18. Ja'len Parks, Florida State
DT, 6-3, 288 Newberry (Newberry, FL)
19. Zaqandre White, Florida State
RB, 6-0, 210 North Fort Myers (North Fort Myers, FL)
20. Jonah Melton, North Carolina
OL, 6-4, 295 Eastern Alamance (Mebane, NC)
21. Justin Foster, Clemson
DE, 6-4, 250 Crest (Shelby, NC)
22. Jake Lawler, North Carolina
DE, 6-4, 225 South Mecklenburg (Charlotte, NC)
23. Jordan Williams, Clemson
DE, 6-5, 260 Frank W. Cox (Virginia Beach, VA)
24. Leonard Warner, Florida State
LB, 6-4, 226 Brookwood (Snellville, GA)
25. Nathan Proctor, Virginia Tech
LB, 6-3, 200 Henry E. Lackey (Indian Head, MD)
26. N'Kosi Perry, Miami
QB, 6-4, 176 Vanguard (Ocala, FL)
27. LeAnthony Williams Jr., Clemson
CB, 6-0, 170 Roswell (Roswell, GA)
28. Travis Etienne, Clemson
RB, 5-11, 210 Jennings (Jennings, LA)
29. Bruce Jordan-Swilling, Georgia Tech
LB, 6-0, 215 Brother Martin (New Orleans, LA)
30. C.J. Avery, Louisville
S, 6-1, 196 Grenada (Grenada, MS)

2017 TOP UNITS

Quarterbacks – Louisville
Heisman Trophy winner Lamar Jackson returns after a dynamic first full year as Louisville's starting quarterback. Jackson ranked second nationally in averaging 393.4 total yards per game, accounted for 51 overall scores and set a new ACC record for most rushing yards by a quarterback (1,571). The next step in Jackson's progression is to improve as a passer after completing 56.2 percent of his throws in 2016.

Running Backs –
Florida State

Dalvin Cook will be missed, but the Seminoles aren't hurting for options. Five-star prospect Cam Akers has the necessary size and speed combination to emerge as the every-down back. Jacques Patrick rushed for 664 yards as Cook's backup over the last two years and is plenty capable of handling the full-time role. Touted freshman Khalan Laborn and sophomore Amir Rasul provide depth.

Receivers – Clemson

The next wave of standout receivers is ready to emerge. Deon Cain averaged 19.1 yards per catch last season and should fill the void left behind by Mike Williams as the team's go-to target. Ray-Ray McCloud and national championship hero Hunter Renfrow return as secondary targets, while Cornell Powell and Trevion Thompson are slated for more opportunities after grabbing 23 passes in limited action last year.

Offensive Line – Clemson

The Tigers lose All-ACC center Jay Guillermo, but there's a strong foundation in place. Left tackle Mitch Hyatt has started 29 games in his two-year

career and stalwart Tyrone Crowder is back at right guard. Taylor Hearn returns at left guard, while sophomore Sean Pollard takes over as the full-time right tackle.

Defensive Line – Clemson

The Tigers are overflowing with depth and talent here. Dexter Lawrence returns to anchor the interior after producing 9.5 tackles for a loss and seven sacks as a true freshman last fall. Versatile junior Christian Wilkins is slated to slide to tackle after spending all of 2016 at end. He's expected to contend for All-America honors. Wilkins' move was made possible by the emergence of Clelin Ferrell last year, along with a healthy Austin Bryant.

Linebackers – Virginia Tech

A trio of potential All-ACC candidates headlines this group for coordinator Bud Foster. Junior Tremaine Edmunds is a force around the line of scrimmage after recording 18.5 tackles for a loss last season. He's joined by steady senior Andrew Motuapuaka (114 tackles) and hybrid linebacker/safety Mook Reynolds in the starting lineup.

Defensive Backs –
Florida State

Star safety Derwin James is back after missing most of 2016 due to a knee injury, and All-America cornerback Tarvarus McFadden returns after sharing the national lead in interceptions (eight) last season. That's more than enough to lift Florida State's secondary to a place among the nation's best. But this unit also features a handful of former top recruits, along with senior Trey Marshall and converted receiver Ermon Lane at safety.



PETER SIRMON

ACC COORDINATOR CAROUSEL

Clemson: Defense

New: Brent Venables

Old: Marion Hobby, Brent Venables

Not much has changed. Hobby, who had the title of co-defensive coordinator, left Clemson for a job as the defensive line coach with the Jacksonville Jaguars. Venables, who joined the Tigers' staff in 2012, will continue to be the primary defensive play caller. Clemson has ranked in the top three in the ACC in total defense in each of the last four years, including first in 2014 and '16.

Louisville: Offense

New: Lonnie Galloway, Mike Summers

Old: Lonnie Galloway, Chris Klenakis

More semantics here than anything. Summers, who coached the offensive line at Louisville in Bobby Petrino's first stint at the school, was on the Florida staff the past three seasons. He will have the title of co-offensive coordinator, but his primary responsibilities will be the offensive line. Klenakis, the Cards' O-line coach last season, will now coach the tight ends. Galloway retains his job as co-offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach.

Louisville: Defense

New: Peter Sirmon

Old: Todd Grantham

In a strange twist, Louisville and Mississippi State essentially swapped defensive coordinators. As rumors swirled that Sirmon would not be retained after one season at Mississippi State, the school announced on Jan. 11 that Grantham had been hired as its new defensive coordinator. Later that day, Sirmon, a former standout linebacker with the Tennessee Titans, was named to the same position at Louisville. Mississippi State ranked 12th in the SEC in total defense in 2016, Sirmon's first season as a defensive coordinator at any level.

North Carolina: Defense

New: John Papuchis

Old: Gene Chizik

Papuchis was promoted from linebackers coach to defensive coordinator after Chizik stepped down in February to spend more time with his family. Papuchis joined the North Carolina staff in 2015 after a seven-year stint at Nebraska, the final three as the Cornhuskers' defensive coordinator.

Pittsburgh: Offense

New: Shawn Watson

Old: Matt Canada

Perhaps no coordinator's stock rose more in the past year than Canada's. Less than 12 months after being fired by NC State head coach Dave Doeren, Canada was introduced as the offensive coordinator at LSU. In between, he did a tremendous job in his only season at Pittsburgh. In 2016, the Panthers ranked second in the ACC in scoring offense (40.9 ppg, up from 28.2 in 2015) and fourth in total offense (446.8 ypg, up from 377.5 per game). Watson was a curious choice to replace Canada. He served as a quality control coach at Indiana in 2016 but had been promoted to quarterbacks coach by new coach Tom Allen. Previously, he was Charlie Strong's offensive coordinator at Louisville and Texas — until being dismissed by Strong in December 2015.

Wake Forest: Defense

New: Jay Sawvel

Old: Mike Elko

Elko left to become the defensive coordinator at Notre Dame. The Demon Deacons ranked third in the ACC in scoring defense in 2017, allowing only 22.2 points per game. Sawvel did an outstanding job as the defensive coordinator at Minnesota last season; the Gophers ranked fourth in the Big Ten and 21st nationally in total defense (348.8 ypg).

2017 UNIT RANKINGS

| | QB | RB | WR/TE | OL | DL | LB | DB |
|----------------|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 14 | 6 | 12 | 11 | 5 | 8 | 10 |
| CLEMSON | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| DUKE | 6 | 11 | 8 | 9 | 13 | 6 | 14 |
| FLORIDA STATE | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| GEORGIA TECH | 9 | 3 | 14 | 4 | 11 | 12 | 5 |
| LOUISVILLE | 1 | 8 | 2 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 4 |
| MIAMI | 10 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| NORTH CAROLINA | 11 | 13 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 11 | 6 |
| NC STATE | 5 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 9 |
| PITTSBURGH | 7 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 13 | 8 |
| SYRACUSE | 3 | 12 | 7 | 12 | 14 | 7 | 12 |
| VIRGINIA | 12 | 14 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 9 | 13 |
| VIRGINIA TECH | 8 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| WAKE FOREST | 13 | 10 | 11 | 14 | 7 | 14 | 11 |


ERIC DUNGEY

ACC RETURNING LEADERS

| Passing | ATT | COMP | INT | PCT | YDS | TD | AVG/G |
|---------------------------------|-----|-------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| Eric Dungey, Syracuse | 355 | 230 | 64.8 | 2,679 | 15 | 7 | 297.7 |
| Lamar Jackson, Louisville | 409 | 230 | 56.2 | 3,543 | 30 | 9 | 272.5 |
| Deondre Francois, Florida State | 400 | 235 | 58.8 | 3,350 | 20 | 7 | 257.7 |
| Rushing | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | LONG | AVG/G | |
| Lamar Jackson, Louisville | 260 | 1,571 | 6.0 | 21 | 72 | 120.8 | |
| Mark Walton, Miami | 209 | 1,117 | 5.3 | 14 | 80 | 85.9 | |
| Cade Carney, Wake Forest | 156 | 589 | 3.8 | 6 | 55 | 58.9 | |
| Receiving | REC | YDS | AVG | TD | LONG | AVG/G | |
| Ahmon Richards, Miami | 49 | 934 | 19.1 | 3 | 77 | 71.8 | |
| Cam Phillips, Virginia Tech | 76 | 983 | 12.9 | 5 | 55 | 70.2 | |
| Ervin Philips, Syracuse | 90 | 822 | 9.1 | 6 | 58 | 68.5 | |

Tackles: Micah Kiser, Virginia (134); Quin Blanding, Virginia (120)

Sacks: Harold Landry, Boston College (16.5); Duke Ejiofor, Wake Forest (10.5); Bradley Chubb, NC State (10.5)

Interceptions: Tarvarus McFadden, Florida State (8); Jaire Alexander, Louisville (5); Jessie Bates, Wake Forest (5)

2016 ACC STANDINGS

| ATLANTIC | ACC | OVERALL | COASTAL | ACC | OVERALL |
|----------------|-----|---------|----------------|-----|---------|
| CLEMSON | 7-1 | 14-1 | VIRGINIA TECH | 6-2 | 10-4 |
| LOUISVILLE | 7-1 | 9-4 | MIAMI | 5-3 | 9-4 |
| FLORIDA STATE | 5-3 | 10-3 | NORTH CAROLINA | 5-3 | 8-5 |
| NC STATE | 3-5 | 7-6 | PITTSBURGH | 5-3 | 8-5 |
| WAKE FOREST | 3-5 | 7-6 | GEORGIA TECH | 4-4 | 9-4 |
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 2-6 | 7-6 | DUKE | 1-7 | 4-8 |
| SYRACUSE | 2-6 | 4-8 | VIRGINIA | 1-7 | 2-10 |

2016 BOWL RESULTS

National Championship Game: Clemson 35, Alabama 31

Fiesta Bowl: Clemson 31, Ohio State 0

Orange Bowl: Florida State 33, Michigan 32

Citrus Bowl: LSU 29, Louisville 9

TaxSlayer Bowl: Georgia Tech 33, Kentucky 18

Russell Athletic Bowl: Miami (Fla.) 31, West Virginia 14

Belk Bowl: Virginia Tech 35, Arkansas 24

Sun Bowl: Stanford 25, North Carolina 23

Pinstripe Bowl: Northwestern 31, Pittsburgh 24

Independence Bowl: NC State 41, Vanderbilt 17

Military Bowl: Wake Forest 34, Temple 26

Quick Lane Bowl: Boston College 36, Maryland 30

OFFENSE

2016 ACC TEAM STATS & RANKINGS

DEFENSE

| | Scoring | Rush | Pass | Total |
|----------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 20.4 (13) | 149.1 (10) | 143.8 (13) | 292.8 (14) |
| CLEMSON | 39.2 (3) | 169.7 (6) | 333.9 (1) | 503.7 (2) |
| DUKE | 23.3 (11) | 153.6 (8) | 239.8 (9) | 393.3 (10) |
| FLORIDA STATE | 35.1 (4) | 202.2 (4) | 264.1 (6) | 466.2 (3) |
| GEORGIA TECH | 28.2 (8) | 258.1 (1) | 129.2 (14) | 387.2 (11) |
| LOUISVILLE | 42.5 (1) | 242.2 (2) | 290.5 (4) | 532.7 (1) |
| MIAMI | 34.3 (6) | 151.8 (9) | 274.2 (5) | 425.9 (8) |
| NORTH CAROLINA | 32.3 (7) | 145.9 (11) | 293.2 (3) | 439.0 (7) |
| NC STATE | 27.0 (9) | 156.2 (7) | 260.2 (8) | 416.4 (9) |
| PITTSBURGH | 40.9 (2) | 225.1 (3) | 221.7 (11) | 446.8 (4) |
| SYRACUSE | 25.7 (10) | 119.6 (13) | 321.3 (2) | 440.8 (6) |
| VIRGINIA | 22.5 (12) | 113.6 (14) | 239.3 (10) | 352.9 (12) |
| VIRGINIA TECH | 35.0 (5) | 183.1 (5) | 261.9 (7) | 444.9 (5) |
| WAKE FOREST | 20.4 (13) | 145.8 (12) | 165.7 (12) | 311.5 (13) |

| | Scoring | Rush | Pass | Total |
|----------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 25.0 (9) | 108.5 (1) | 205.6 (4) | 314.2 (2) |
| CLEMSON | 18.0 (1) | 129.6 (6) | 181.9 (2) | 311.5 (1) |
| DUKE | 28.2 (11) | 174.9 (11) | 239.8 (10) | 414.7 (11) |
| FLORIDA STATE | 25.0 (9) | 128.0 (5) | 221.1 (7) | 349.1 (6) |
| GEORGIA TECH | 24.5 (7) | 172.2 (10) | 229.4 (9) | 401.6 (9) |
| LOUISVILLE | 23.8 (6) | 115.2 (3) | 207.1 (5) | 322.2 (3) |
| MIAMI | 18.5 (2) | 131.6 (7) | 213.8 (6) | 345.4 (5) |
| NORTH CAROLINA | 24.9 (8) | 227.3 (14) | 180.8 (1) | 408.1 (10) |
| NC STATE | 22.8 (4) | 108.6 (2) | 244.2 (11) | 352.8 (7) |
| PITTSBURGH | 35.2 (13) | 119.6 (4) | 333.2 (14) | 452.8 (13) |
| SYRACUSE | 38.6 (14) | 225.0 (13) | 276.1 (13) | 501.1 (14) |
| VIRGINIA | 33.8 (12) | 190.0 (12) | 256.6 (12) | 446.6 (12) |
| VIRGINIA TECH | 22.8 (4) | 140.5 (8) | 200.2 (3) | 340.7 (4) |
| WAKE FOREST | 22.2 (3) | 142.4 (9) | 228.2 (8) | 370.5 (8) |

Dungey: Bruce Schwartzman; Jackson, Wilkins, Sheldon: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Francois: John Sommers II; Ejiofor: Margaret Bowles

ALL- ACC TEAMS

ACC PREVIEW

First-Team Offense

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|------|-----|-----|---------------|
| QB | Lamar Jackson | 6-3 | 200 | Jr. | Louisville |
| RB | Dedrick Mills | 5-10 | 217 | So. | Georgia Tech |
| RB | Mark Walton | 5-9 | 205 | Jr. | Miami |
| AP | Jaylen Samuels | 5-11 | 223 | Sr. | NC State |
| WR | Deon Cain | 6-1 | 210 | Jr. | Clemson |
| WR | Ahmmmon Richards | 6-1 | 190 | So. | Miami |
| TE | Christopher Herndon IV | 6-4 | 252 | Sr. | Miami |
| OL | Tony Adams | 6-2 | 322 | Sr. | NC State |
| OL | Tyrone Crowder | 6-2 | 340 | Sr. | Clemson |
| OL | Mitch Hyatt | 6-5 | 295 | Jr. | Clemson |
| OL | Brian O'Neill | 6-6 | 300 | Jr. | Pittsburgh |
| OL | Wyatt Teller | 6-5 | 308 | Sr. | Virginia Tech |
| K | Michael Badgley | 5-10 | 178 | Sr. | Miami |
| KR | Quadree Henderson | 5-8 | 190 | Jr. | Pittsburgh |



LAMAR JACKSON

First-Team Defense

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------------|------|-----|-----|----------------|
| DL | Bradley Chubb | 6-4 | 275 | Sr. | NC State |
| DL | Harold Landry | 6-3 | 250 | Sr. | Boston College |
| DL | Dexter Lawrence | 6-5 | 340 | So. | Clemson |
| DL | Christian Wilkins | 6-4 | 310 | Jr. | Clemson |
| LB | Tremaine Edmunds | 6-5 | 236 | Jr. | Virginia Tech |
| LB | Micah Kiser | 6-2 | 240 | Sr. | Virginia |
| LB | Stacy Thomas | 6-1 | 240 | Sr. | Louisville |
| CB | Jaire Alexander | 5-11 | 192 | Jr. | Louisville |
| CB | Tarvarus McFadden | 6-2 | 198 | Jr. | Florida State |
| S | Quin Blanding | 6-2 | 215 | Sr. | Virginia |
| S | Derwin James | 6-3 | 211 | So. | Florida State |
| P | Sterling Hofrichter | 5-9 | 198 | So. | Syracuse |
| PR | Braxton Berrios | 5-9 | 186 | Sr. | Miami |



CHRISTIAN WILKINS

SECOND-TEAM OFFENSE

| | | | | | |
|----|-------------------|------|-----|-----|----------------|
| QB | Deondre Francois | 6-2 | 205 | So. | Florida State |
| RB | Cam Akers | 5-11 | 213 | Fr. | Florida State |
| RB | Jacques Patrick | 6-2 | 231 | Jr. | Florida State |
| AP | Quadree Henderson | 5-8 | 190 | Jr. | Pitt |
| WR | Nyqwan Murray | 5-11 | 176 | Jr. | Florida State |
| WR | Cam Phillips | 6-0 | 199 | Sr. | Virginia Tech |
| TE | Cam Serigne | 6-3 | 250 | Sr. | Wake Forest |
| OL | Parker Braun | 6-3 | 280 | So. | Georgia Tech |
| OL | Geron Christian | 6-6 | 318 | Jr. | Louisville |
| OL | Austin Davis | 6-4 | 290 | Sr. | Duke |
| OL | Alex Officer | 6-4 | 335 | Sr. | Pitt |
| OL | Bentley Spain | 6-6 | 300 | Sr. | North Carolina |



JACQUES PATRICK

SECOND-TEAM DEFENSE

| | | | | | |
|----|-------------------|------|-----|-----|----------------|
| DL | Duke Ejirofor | 6-4 | 270 | Sr. | Wake Forest |
| DL | Clelin Ferrell | 6-5 | 265 | So. | Clemson |
| DL | Derrick Nnadi | 6-1 | 312 | Sr. | Florida State |
| DL | Josh Sweat | 6-5 | 250 | Jr. | Florida State |
| LB | Kendall Joseph | 6-0 | 230 | Jr. | Clemson |
| LB | Andrew Motuapuaka | 6-0 | 233 | Sr. | Virginia Tech |
| LB | Shaq Quarterman | 6-1 | 240 | So. | Miami |
| CB | M.J. Stewart | 6-0 | 200 | Sr. | North Carolina |
| CB | Greg Stroman | 6-0 | 180 | Sr. | Virginia Tech |
| S | Jessie Bates III | 6-2 | 200 | So. | Wake Forest |
| S | Jordan Whitehead | 5-11 | 190 | Jr. | Pitt |



DUKE EJIORFOR

SECOND-TEAM SPECIALISTS

| | | | | | |
|----|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|----------------|
| K | Mike Weaver | 6-1 | 195 | Sr. | Wake Forest |
| P | Tom Sheldon | 6-3 | 200 | So. | North Carolina |
| KR | Joe Reed | 6-3 | 210 | So. | Virginia |
| PR | Quadree Henderson | 5-8 | 190 | Jr. | Pitt |



TOM SHELTON

THIRD-TEAM OFFENSE

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------|------|-----|-----|----------------|
| QB | Eric Dungey | 6-3 | 221 | Jr. | Syracuse |
| RB | Travon McMillian | 6-0 | 205 | Jr. | Virginia Tech |
| RB | Qadree Ollison | 6-2 | 225 | Jr. | Pitt |
| AP | Nyheim Hines | 5-9 | 197 | Jr. | NC State |
| WR | Jester Weah | 6-3 | 210 | Sr. | Pitt |
| WR | Ervin Phillips | 5-11 | 184 | Sr. | Syracuse |
| TE | Tommy Sweeney | 6-5 | 258 | Jr. | Boston College |
| OL | Jon Baker | 6-3 | 298 | Sr. | Boston College |
| OL | Alex Bookser | 6-6 | 315 | Jr. | Pitt |
| OL | Landon Dickerson | 6-5 | 310 | So. | Florida State |
| OL | Kc McDermott | 6-7 | 300 | Sr. | Miami |
| OL | Yosuah Nijman | 6-7 | 300 | Jr. | Virginia Tech |

THIRD-TEAM DEFENSE

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------------|------|-----|-----|---------------|
| DL | Brian Burns | 6-5 | 218 | So. | Florida State |
| DL | Joe Jackson | 6-5 | 258 | So. | Miami |
| DL | Kendrick Norton | 6-3 | 312 | Jr. | Miami |
| DL | Tim Settle | 6-3 | 328 | So. | Virginia Tech |
| LB | Ben Humphreys | 6-2 | 220 | Jr. | Duke |
| LB | Matthew Thomas | 6-3 | 227 | Sr. | Florida State |
| LB | Zaire Franklin | 6-0 | 244 | Sr. | Syracuse |
| CB | Lance Austin | 5-10 | 183 | Sr. | Georgia Tech |
| CB | Brandon Facyson | 6-2 | 197 | Sr. | Virginia Tech |
| S | Terrell Edmunds | 6-2 | 210 | Jr. | Virginia Tech |
| S | Chucky Williams | 6-2 | 207 | Sr. | Louisville |

THIRD-TEAM SPECIALISTS

| | | | | | |
|----|--------------|------|-----|-----|---------------|
| K | Greg Huegel | 5-11 | 195 | Jr. | Clemson |
| P | Dom Maggio | 6-3 | 185 | So. | Wake Forest |
| KR | Shaun Wilson | 5-9 | 185 | Sr. | Duke |
| PR | Greg Stroman | 6-0 | 180 | Sr. | Virginia Tech |

ADVANCED STATS

The 5 Factors

Field Position

| Team | OffAvgFP | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | DefAvgFP | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | FP Margin | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk |
|----------------|----------|--------|--------|----------|--------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 32.6 | 17 | 2 | 31.1 | 100 | 14 | 1.5 | 50 | 7 |
| CLEMSON | 32.0 | 21 | 3 | 28.5 | 43 | 4 | 3.5 | 23 | 2 |
| DUKE | 29.0 | 81 | 12 | 29.3 | 68 | 9 | -0.3 | 75 | 10 |
| FLORIDA STATE | 29.2 | 77 | 11 | 30.3 | 89 | 12 | -1.1 | 87 | 12 |
| GEORGIA TECH | 29.4 | 72 | 10 | 28.3 | 42 | 3 | 1.1 | 56 | 8 |
| LOUISVILLE | 31.9 | 22 | 4 | 30.2 | 85 | 11 | 1.7 | 46 | 5 |
| MIAMI-FL | 31.1 | 35 | 6 | 27.8 | 30 | 1 | 3.3 | 25 | 3 |
| NC STATE | 29.8 | 63 | 9 | 30.9 | 99 | 13 | -1.1 | 90 | 14 |
| NORTH CAROLINA | 28.4 | 97 | 13 | 28.8 | 51 | 7 | -0.4 | 76 | 11 |
| PITTSBURGH | 29.8 | 61 | 8 | 28.9 | 57 | 8 | 0.9 | 62 | 9 |
| SYRACUSE | 27.7 | 113 | 14 | 28.8 | 49 | 6 | -1.1 | 88 | 13 |
| VIRGINIA | 31.1 | 37 | 7 | 28.6 | 46 | 5 | 2.5 | 35 | 4 |
| VIRGINIA TECH | 33.7 | 8 | 1 | 28.2 | 40 | 2 | 5.5 | 15 | 1 |
| WAKE FOREST | 31.2 | 32 | 5 | 29.5 | 71 | 10 | 1.7 | 47 | 6 |

Efficiency

| Team | OffSuccessRate | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | DefSuccessRate | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | SuccessRate Margin | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk |
|----------------|----------------|--------|--------|----------------|--------|--------|--------------------|--------|--------|
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 32.1% | 128 | 14 | 32.3% | 4 | 2 | -0.2% | 69 | 9 |
| CLEMSON | 47.6% | 7 | 1 | 32.9% | 6 | 3 | 14.7% | 3 | 2 |
| DUKE | 40.6% | 68 | 10 | 39.1% | 42 | 8 | 1.5% | 55 | 8 |
| FLORIDA STATE | 44.8% | 21 | 3 | 35.1% | 18 | 5 | 9.7% | 12 | 3 |
| GEORGIA TECH | 41.2% | 63 | 8 | 45.3% | 115 | 14 | -4.1% | 97 | 12 |
| LOUISVILLE | 46.6% | 9 | 2 | 31.9% | 3 | 1 | 14.7% | 2 | 1 |
| MIAMI-FL | 40.9% | 66 | 9 | 35.6% | 23 | 7 | 5.3% | 32 | 6 |
| NC STATE | 41.6% | 54 | 7 | 35.3% | 21 | 6 | 6.3% | 24 | 5 |
| NORTH CAROLINA | 42.7% | 43 | 5 | 43.6% | 102 | 12 | -0.9% | 74 | 10 |
| PITTSBURGH | 42.5% | 45 | 6 | 40.5% | 64 | 10 | 2.0% | 53 | 7 |
| SYRACUSE | 37.0% | 109 | 12 | 43.7% | 103 | 13 | -6.7% | 114 | 14 |
| VIRGINIA | 39.0% | 89 | 11 | 42.0% | 81 | 11 | -3.0% | 90 | 11 |
| VIRGINIA TECH | 43.3% | 38 | 4 | 34.8% | 15 | 4 | 8.5% | 16 | 4 |
| WAKE FOREST | 33.6% | 124 | 13 | 39.4% | 48 | 9 | -5.8% | 108 | 13 |

Explosiveness

| Team | OffYds/Play | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | DefYds/Play | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | Yds/Play Margin | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk |
|----------------|-------------|--------|--------|-------------|--------|--------|-----------------|--------|--------|
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 4.4 | 126 | 14 | 5.1 | 25 | 5 | -0.7 | 99 | 10 |
| CLEMSON | 6.2 | 34 | 7 | 4.6 | 5 | 1 | 1.6 | 13 | 3 |
| DUKE | 5.2 | 109 | 11 | 6.3 | 105 | 12 | -1.1 | 117 | 12 |
| FLORIDA STATE | 6.5 | 23 | 5 | 5.3 | 37 | 7 | 1.2 | 20 | 5 |
| GEORGIA TECH | 6.5 | 19 | 4 | 5.8 | 68 | 10 | 0.7 | 30 | 6 |
| LOUISVILLE | 7.2 | 4 | 1 | 4.7 | 8 | 2 | 2.5 | 1 | 1 |
| MIAMI-FL | 6.4 | 25 | 6 | 4.8 | 9 | 3 | 1.6 | 8 | 2 |
| NC STATE | 5.8 | 66 | 8 | 5.1 | 29 | 6 | 0.7 | 38 | 9 |
| NORTH CAROLINA | 6.6 | 17 | 3 | 5.4 | 43 | 9 | 1.2 | 19 | 4 |
| PITTSBURGH | 6.7 | 13 | 2 | 6.0 | 87 | 11 | 0.7 | 32 | 8 |
| SYRACUSE | 5.5 | 84 | 10 | 6.9 | 124 | 14 | -1.4 | 122 | 13 |
| VIRGINIA | 4.9 | 119 | 12 | 6.3 | 108 | 13 | -1.4 | 123 | 14 |
| VIRGINIA TECH | 5.7 | 68 | 9 | 5.0 | 19 | 4 | 0.7 | 31 | 7 |
| WAKE FOREST | 4.6 | 125 | 13 | 5.3 | 39 | 8 | -0.7 | 104 | 11 |

In this publication, you'll find a series of references to what we call the Five Factors. They are interrelated and are more descriptive than prescriptive — you can't simply say, "We need to improve on turnovers" and make it so — but they are wonderfully useful in examining what went right or wrong for a team in the previous season. So what's the best way to look at these factors? Some are more simple and direct than others.

Field Position: Simply looking at a team's (and its opponent's) average starting field position is a clean way of determining how a team leveraged the field in its favor. A team can create an advantage (or disadvantage) through numerous means — good kicking or punting, good returns, turnovers, avoiding three-and-outs (and creating plenty for the opponent) — but average starting field position is the easiest way to measure the result.

Efficiency: Success Rate is an on-base percentage for football; it creates a definition of success for every play — 50 percent of necessary yardage on first down, 70 percent on second down, 100 percent on third or fourth down — and, over time, gives you a clean, easy look at how well a team stays on schedule and ahead of the chains. Explosiveness, your ability to create big plays and easy scores, is often seen as the most important factor in football, but you still have only three to four plays to gain 10 yards, and Success Rate tells you almost everything you need to know about how teams perform in that regard.

Explosiveness: In a pinch, Yards Per Play will suffice just fine when it comes to gauging explosiveness. From an advanced level, there are other options. PPP measures the equivalent point value of every play by assigning a point value to every yard

line (based on the net points an offense is expected to generate from yard to yard). Isolated PPP looks at the point value of a team's successful plays (as determined by the Success Rate equation above). With IsoPPP, you can boil offense down to two questions: How often were you successful? And when you were successful, how successful were you?

Finishing Drives: Throughout this publication, we'll look at one simple measure to judge the ability to finish drives: points per trip inside the opponent's 40. There is more separation between good and bad teams if you stretch the "scoring opportunity" definition to the 40, but you can get a good feel for drive-finishing ability by looking at the typical red-zone definition, too. **WARNING:** Avoid "red zone scoring percentage" averages. Over time, there is an enormous difference between scoring a touchdown and settling for a field goal, and "scoring percentage" treats them the same. Aim more toward touchdown percentages or the superior "points per trip."

Turnovers: You can certainly look at turnover margin to roughly gauge the impact of turnovers. You can also look into the field position and points immediately created by those turnovers if you want to get a little bit more accurate. To aim at both the effect and randomness of turnovers, you will find a comparison of actual numbers and "projected" turnovers based on what a team's turnover margin would have been with an average number of fumble recoveries (50 percent on average, obviously) and interceptions (a team normally averages one interception for every four pass break-ups). That will give you an idea for both who committed and forced the most and who was particularly lucky or unlucky regarding the bouncing of the pointy ball.

Finishing Drives

| Team | OffPtsPerOpp | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | DefPtsPerOpp | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | PtsPerOpp Margin | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk |
|----------------|--------------|--------|--------|--------------|--------|--------|------------------|--------|--------|
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 3.7 | 123 | 14 | 4.8 | 92 | 12 | -1.1 | 123 | 14 |
| CLEMSON | 4.9 | 25 | 3 | 3.7 | 14 | 2 | 1.2 | 8 | 1 |
| DUKE | 3.7 | 122 | 13 | 4.4 | 62 | 10 | -0.7 | 113 | 12 |
| FLORIDA STATE | 4.9 | 32 | 4 | 4.2 | 43 | 7 | 0.7 | 28 | 5 |
| GEORGIA TECH | 4.7 | 43 | 5 | 4.3 | 51 | 9 | 0.4 | 40 | 7 |
| LOUISVILLE | 5.0 | 19 | 2 | 4.2 | 38 | 5 | 0.8 | 16 | 3 |
| MIAMI-FL | 4.6 | 53 | 7 | 3.7 | 11 | 1 | 0.9 | 13 | 2 |
| NC STATE | 4.0 | 107 | 11 | 4.2 | 40 | 6 | -0.2 | 86 | 10 |
| NORTH CAROLINA | 4.7 | 44 | 6 | 4.1 | 31 | 4 | 0.6 | 23 | 4 |
| PITTSBURGH | 5.4 | 5 | 1 | 4.9 | 106 | 14 | 0.5 | 39 | 6 |
| SYRACUSE | 4.0 | 104 | 10 | 4.8 | 98 | 13 | -0.8 | 117 | 13 |
| VIRGINIA | 4.2 | 94 | 9 | 4.6 | 77 | 11 | -0.4 | 97 | 11 |
| VIRGINIA TECH | 4.4 | 80 | 8 | 4.2 | 45 | 8 | 0.2 | 55 | 8 |
| WAKE FOREST | 3.8 | 119 | 12 | 3.8 | 18 | 3 | 0.0 | 69 | 9 |

Adjusted Turnover Margin

| Team | TO Margin | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | Projected TO Margin | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk | Difference | Nat-Rk | ACC-Rk |
|----------------|-----------|--------|--------|---------------------|--------|--------|------------|--------|--------|
| BOSTON COLLEGE | 7 | 24 | 3 | 4.8 | 28 | 3 | 2.2 | 43 | 4 |
| CLEMSON | -1 | 71 | 8 | 4.2 | 34 | 5 | -5.2 | 107 | 12 |
| DUKE | -4 | 90 | 12 | -5.5 | 110 | 13 | 1.5 | 47 | 5 |
| FLORIDA STATE | 3 | 41 | 5 | -6.7 | 117 | 14 | 9.7 | 6 | 1 |
| GEORGIA TECH | 4 | 36 | 4 | -3.1 | 90 | 11 | 7.1 | 13 | 2 |
| LOUISVILLE | -7 | 107 | 13 | -5.1 | 106 | 12 | -1.9 | 81 | 10 |
| MIAMI-FL | 9 | 14 | 1 | 10.4 | 4 | 1 | -1.4 | 77 | 9 |
| NC STATE | 2 | 47 | 6 | 2.8 | 47 | 6 | -0.8 | 70 | 7 |
| NORTH CAROLINA | -2 | 78 | 11 | 7.4 | 12 | 2 | -9.4 | 124 | 13 |
| PITTSBURGH | 1 | 54 | 7 | -0.4 | 73 | 10 | 1.4 | 50 | 6 |
| SYRACUSE | -1 | 71 | 8 | 0.3 | 69 | 9 | -1.3 | 75 | 8 |
| VIRGINIA | -9 | 116 | 14 | 1.0 | 63 | 8 | -10.0 | 126 | 14 |
| VIRGINIA TECH | -1 | 71 | 8 | 1.4 | 59 | 7 | -2.4 | 84 | 11 |
| WAKE FOREST | 8 | 18 | 2 | 4.5 | 31 | 4 | 3.5 | 31 | 3 |

Changing the Narrative

The ACC is making a serious play for college football supremacy

BY JON SOLOMON



Clemson: AP; Right: Harrison McClary/Athlon Sports; Fuente: Chris Kean

A funny thing happened in college football last season: The ACC was the best conference. No, seriously.

We're only a couple years removed from a time when the ACC regularly challenged the old Big East for the label of worst major football conference. From 1998 through 2011, the ACC had a 2-13 record in BCS bowls and was a laughingstock.

But the narrative turned dramatically in 2016. It wasn't just that Clemson topped Alabama for the national title, although that certainly helped. But Clemson also routed Ohio State in the semifinals, Florida State edged Michigan at the Orange Bowl and the ACC had a combined 16-6 record vs. the SEC and Big Ten.

From 2004-13, the ACC was 30-54 vs. the SEC, which used to lord over the sport. Since 2014, the ACC is 19-13 vs. the SEC.

"I think all you media folks need to change your stories," Clemson coach Dabo Swinney says. "It sounds good. I've been in this league a long time, and this league has never gotten the respect that it deserves. But I said about five years ago or something, just keep your mouth shut and go play. If we want to change the story, then we've got to change it from the inside out."

The ACC did. Now, can a basketball-centric conference sustain football success?

"Now we just need to continue that upward trajectory of staying there, and that's hard to do," ACC commissioner John Swofford says. "But to stay there, you have to get there first. I think the narrative of ACC football has changed over the last five years, and it needed to."

The SEC still has more money than the ACC, which plans to launch a TV network with ESPN by 2019. In 2014-15, the most recent available year for tax records for both conferences, the SEC distributed about \$32.7 million to schools, while the ACC paid out roughly \$27 million. The SEC was up to \$40.4 million per team in 2015-16.

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*Quarterback is where I think the rest of the country, especially the ACC, has been able to close the gap to a degree on the SEC. **The (ACC) quarterback play is just better than in the SEC.***

— Phil Savage,
Senior Bowl Executive Director

”

The ACC won't always be this good in football. The SEC won't always be Alabama And Everyone Else. But the ACC, which has always fielded a lot of NFL-caliber talent, at least now has the blueprint for sustained success.

HIRING BETTER COACHES

Lately, the ACC has made the kind of coaching hires that we're used to seeing from the SEC. Money is no problem for the SEC, yet its schools are sacrificing accomplished résumés for cost savings, coaches connected to Nick Saban, or both. The 2016 season marked the least experienced group of SEC head coaches in 52 years, and it showed.

The eat-or-be-eaten world of the SEC seems to have turned off some coaches. Tom Herman chose Texas over LSU, which promoted interim head coach Ed Orgeron. Georgia went with Kirby Smart, who had no head coaching experience until last season. Will Muschamp got a second life at South Carolina after failing at Florida. Jim McElwain won the SEC East his first two years, but that's not the achievement it used to be. Missouri, the SEC East champion in 2013-14, hired Barry Odom without college head coaching experience.

Look who the ACC hired in 2016: Miami's Mark Richt, Syracuse's Dino Babers, Virginia's Bronco Mendenhall and Virginia Tech's Justin Fuente. Prior to their arrival at their respective schools, they had a combined .698 winning percentage and 307 career wins. Meanwhile, the ACC had previously brought in Pat Narduzzi (Pittsburgh), Bobby Petrino (Louisville) and Dave Clawson (Wake Forest) to increase the depth.

Ultimately, a conference is measured by how many elite teams it has. The ACC changed dramatically as Clemson and Florida State — the subject of Big 12 expansion rumors not too long ago — became elite simultaneously. Dabo Swinney and Jimbo Fisher, two



The ACC coaching roll call includes a couple of impressive recent arrivals: established A-lister Mark Richt of Miami (top) and rising star Justin Fuente of Virginia Tech.

former SEC assistants, brought an SEC mentality to the ACC that upped the ante.

Fisher turned down LSU in consecutive years to stay at Florida State, which he obviously considers a better job.

Swinney may one day face the question about whether he wants to replace Saban at Alabama. But that day isn't here yet, and Clemson is built to be elite over the long haul. The Tigers just moved into DaboLand, a \$55 million team building that includes a slide, mini-golf, wiffle ball field, basketball courts and outdoor grills.

"You don't want to play a team from this conference," Swinney says. "You just don't. I don't care — name one. That's why we're ready. That's why we're ready to go play Oklahoma two years in a row. That's why we're ready to go play Ohio State two out of the last four years. We're ready because of what we see week in and week out in this conference."



The ACC has flourished in recent years thanks in large part to outstanding play from quarterbacks like Louisville's Lamar Jackson.

QUARTERBACK PLAY

In recent years, the ACC closed the gap with the SEC by gaining an edge at quarterback. Elite quarterbacks from the ACC/SEC footprint started swinging to the ACC.

Jameis Winston started the trend by leaving Birmingham, Ala., for Florida State. Deshaun Watson was raised in Gainesville, Ga., but he became a Clemson Tiger, not a Georgia Bulldog. Heisman Trophy winner Lamar Jackson, who was under-recruited out of Boynton Beach, Fla., chose Louisville despite a late push by Florida. Deondre Francois, from Orlando, went to Florida State after Florida swung and missed on him, too.

"Quarterback is where I think the rest of the country, especially the ACC, has been able to close the gap to a degree on the SEC," says Senior Bowl executive director Phil Savage, a former NFL general manager.

"The [ACC] quarterback play is just better than in the SEC. People argue the defenses in the SEC are better, and that's probably true. But for just the pure spinning of the football and the overall arm talent, there's been a quartet of [ACC] guys that can really throw it."

The SEC has led college football in NFL Draft picks for 10 consecutive years. But all of the speed, strength and athleticism can

only take a team so far without a quality quarterback. Alabama's Jalen Hurts showed great poise and may be terrific in the future, but he got exposed as a true freshman in the College Football Playoff given his passing limitations.

From 2012-16, SEC teams signed 39 four- or five-star quarterbacks, according to 247Sports. So far, only one of those recruits turned into a very important player who finished his career at the same school: Tennessee's Joshua Dobbs. Major SEC recruits David Cornwell, Kyler Murray, Kyle Allen, Kenny Hill, Will Grier, Maty Mauk, Hayden Rettig and Zeke Pike have come and gone.

Over the same period, ACC teams signed 21 four- or five-star quarterbacks. As of now, three have been very good players and stayed at their schools the entire time — Winston, Watson, and Miami's Brad Kaaya. Jackson and Francois appear headed in that direction, too. So far, the hit-rate scoreboard on these QB recruits: 14 percent for the ACC, 3 percent for the SEC.

The SEC had one passer in 2016 ranked among the top 25 in quarterback rating (Dobbs), according to CFBStats.com. The ACC had six (Pittsburgh's Nathan Peterman, North Carolina's Mitch Trubisky, Virginia Tech's Jerod Evans, Watson, Kaaya and Jackson).

However, only Jackson returns from that

ACC group in 2017. The SEC will bank on the possibly bright futures of Hurts, Ole Miss' Shea Patterson, Georgia's Jacob Eason, Florida's Feleipe Franks (or Kyle Trask), Tennessee's Jarrett Guarantano (or Quinten Dormady) and South Carolina's Jake Bentley. Half of the top-14 rated quarterback recruits in 2017 are going to the ACC or SEC, including No. 2 Hunter Johnson to Clemson and No. 3 Tua Tagovailoa to Alabama.

IMPROVED DEFENSES

According to Bill Connelly's S&P+ rankings, eight of the top 22 defenses in the country last season came from the ACC: No. 6 Clemson, No. 10 Florida State, No. 11 NC State, No. 13 Miami, No. 17 Virginia Tech, No. 19 Louisville, No. 21 Boston College and No. 22 Wake Forest. Only the Big Ten, which had worse offenses, played better defense on average than the ACC based on the S&P+ rankings.

Now, whether that's sustainable for the ACC remains to be seen. Eight of the 11 players on the first-team All-ACC defense were seniors, and two others declared early for the draft. The next wave of stars includes Clemson defensive linemen Christian Wilkins and Dexter Lawrence and Florida State defensive backs Derwin James (who missed most of 2016 with an injury) and Tarvarus McFadden.

Having several quality defenses was a huge key for the SEC becoming a major power. The last time the ACC seriously tried to compete with the SEC was more than a decade ago.

From 1999-2003, the ACC and SEC split 36 games. There were arguments made by coaches and in the media that the ACC had surpassed the SEC and was better positioned for the future due to adding Miami, Virginia Tech and Boston College in 2004-05. Florida State's Bobby Bowden even bragged in 2004 that, by adding Miami, "The state of Florida is going to learn about the ACC," and "the stepbrother is down in Gainesville."

That didn't happen. The SEC won seven straight national titles (from 2006-12) with Alabama, Florida, LSU and Auburn. The ACC, which has won only seven football national titles in its history, went 14 years without winning one during its longest drought since 1953-81.

But thanks in part to the league's defensive resurgence, the ACC and SEC have somewhat flipped roles in recent years. Last season, for the first time since 2002, only one SEC team finished in the final top 10 of the Associated Press top 25. The SEC had five final top-10 teams combined from 2014-16, down from 13 in the previous three seasons.

IS ACC SUCCESS SUSTAINABLE?

Herein lies the major question for the ACC: How many of its schools really want to win big in football? Clemson and Florida State are givens. They've got SEC-style fan bases and history.

Virginia Tech has a passionate fan base that wants to return to the glory years of Frank Beamer. Richt returned to his alma mater to try to reinvigorate "The U," and Miami is raising millions of dollars to build an indoor practice facility. Louisville is the ACC's best example of a basketball-centric school that has shown how it's possible to build up football, too.

Still, as a whole, the SEC will always have more rabid fans than the ACC, for better or worse. That passion drives schools to win at all costs — sometimes at the

expense of NCAA violations (hello, Ole Miss). Who in the ACC is really willing to stay involved in cutthroat recruiting, managing the academic eligibility shell game for pockets of players, and the football spending arms race? Some ACC schools will be willing, but probably not as many as in the SEC.

Where the ACC has an edge is coaching stability, and that's huge. In recent years, the SEC has become an odd whack-a-mole game where almost every coach not named Saban appears on hot-seat lists every so often.

The SEC isn't going to wither and die. Florida, Alabama and Tennessee have made smart athletic director hires recently in Scott Stricklin, Greg Byrne and John Currie, respectively. Yet it's a conference in transition compared to the ACC, which

lost a few key assistants to the SEC this offseason, such as Mississippi State defensive coordinator Todd Grantham (from Louisville) and LSU offensive coordinator Matt Canada (from Pittsburgh).

What changed? "The easy observation is everybody wants what we achieved," SEC commissioner Greg Sankey says.

No kidding. The ACC took the bold step of moving up its media days this summer to compete for one day with the SEC. On July 13, the media can choose between hearing Gus Malzahn, Hugh Freeze and Will Muschamp talk about the SEC, or Dabo Swinney, Jimbo Fisher and Bobby Petrino about the ACC. The SEC could have countered by scheduling Saban on July 13, but didn't.

The ACC has sent a message. Now comes the hard part: Sustaining that success.

GAME OF THE YEAR

It's long past time to state the obvious: Clemson-Florida State is college football's best annual game.

Rest in peace, Alabama-LSU, at least until the Tigers snap their six-game losing streak to Nick Saban. We see you, Ohio State-Michigan — which had a classic thriller last year — but Jim Harbaugh still must beat Urban Meyer to get the series over the hump.

Neither of those games feels like where we're at with Clemson-Florida State, which is the game that's most likely to have huge national championship implications each year. That's what we mean by "best." We don't mean best rivalry, most-watched game or even necessarily the most well-played game.

Rather, Clemson-Florida State is the one game you can bank on having to watch to figure out the College Football Playoff.

Look at the facts. Only four schools have had top-15 teams over each of the past five years: Alabama, Ohio State, Florida State and Clemson. Clemson-Florida State has produced five straight years of top-15 final rankings for both teams, something the Alabama-LSU series never accomplished under Saban and Les Miles.

Alabama and LSU each finished in the top 15 for four straight years (2010-13). So did Stanford and Oregon out of the Pac-12 during that same period. Clemson and Florida State are at five and counting.



Florida State won the final BCS title in 2013 and reached the CFP semifinals in 2014. Clemson narrowly lost the CFP National Championship to Alabama in 2015 and exacted revenge by topping the Crimson Tide in 2016.

The talent in Clemson-Florida State games has reached an incredibly high level. From 2011-15, the Clemson-Florida State games produced 62 NFL Draft picks and 12 first-rounders. That's very close to the Alabama-LSU series (71 draft picks, 16 first-rounders) and Florida-Florida State (64 draft picks, 14 first-rounders).

Clemson-Florida State surpass-

es the talent produced from more hyped annual series, such as Miami-Florida State (55 draft picks, 10 first-rounders), Ohio State-Michigan (43 draft picks, eight first-rounders) and Oklahoma-Texas (40 draft picks, 12 first-rounders).

Seminoles coach Jimbo Fisher says that the talent and physicality of the Clemson games is "absolutely" similar to SEC games he used to coach in for 13 years. Just like Alabama-LSU once was, Clemson-Florida State is the game in the back of everyone's mind that will define both teams' seasons.

Recently departed Florida State running back Dalvin Cook says Clemson is moving into the conversation of becoming the Seminoles' top rival.

"That's a game that the fans and the players and our whole staff look forward to," he says. "They recruit talent just like we do so you've got to respect the game. That's just become the rivalry between Florida State and Clemson and I love it."

For six straight years, the Clemson-Florida State winner has won the ACC. The loser of that game has still averaged 10 wins. In other words: Circle Nov. 11, 2017, for Florida State at Clemson. It's the game that matters most.

— Jon Solomon



BOSTON COLLEGE EAGLES

National Forecast: 70 /// ACC Atlantic Prediction: 7

Momentum can be a funny thing. At one point in the 2016 season, all of it seemed to be trending against Boston College coach Steve Addazio in his fourth season in Chestnut Hill. Following back-to-back blowout losses to ACC Atlantic Division foes Louisville and Florida State by a combined 97-14 margin, the Eagles had fallen to 4-6 overall and 1-6 in league play. Coming off a 2015 in which BC went winless in eight ACC contests, Addazio's tenure at the Heights seemed shaky at best.

But then the Eagles found just a glimmer of hope over the final three games of the season, and Addazio has new life, even if his situation isn't exactly the most stable after the resignation of athletic director Brad Bates. Those three wins — over non-conference foe UConn, division opponent Wake Forest and Maryland in the Quick Lane Bowl — gave the program its first postseason victory since 2007 and a winning season for the third time in Addazio's four years.

So Addazio's seat went from scorching to merely warm with that strong finish. But the question remains as to whether he can do what he hasn't yet been able to do at BC: Take the next step from a pesky, middle-of-the-pack (at best) team to a true contender in the ACC.

Maybe last year serves as an adequate approximation of BC's ceiling as a program. But with a new AD (Martin Jarmond) taking over, anything less than hitting that mark this season could be playing with fire. After all, Addazio knows just how fickle this momentum thing can be.

QUARTERBACKS The major Achilles heel for Addazio's BC teams has been quarterback development. In four years, Addazio has begun the season with four different starting quarterbacks, and the overall quality of play has ranged from inconsistent to just plain bad. There is hope, however, that offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler has found the player to turn those fortunes around in redshirt freshman Anthony Brown. The 6'1", 210-pounder from New Jersey has the type of dual-threat capabilities that Addazio tends to covet in signal callers. If he does not end up as the starter, the next man up would be junior Darius Wade, but the confidence level in Brown to come in and take the reins right now is fairly high. Brown's play could be the difference between the Eagles being a four- or five-win team and an seven- or eight-win one.

RUNNING BACKS Don't look for a lot of turnover here, but the Eagles will look for some improvement. They have experienced performers on this unit, and they're getting an infusion of young talent in true freshman A.J. Dillon, who flipped his commitment from Michigan late in the process to join the Eagles. Even without Dillon, BC would have been in a good spot. Although junior Jon Hilliman has been one of the offense's top players in his time at the Heights, he averaged only 2.9 yards per carry last season. Sophomore Davon Jones carved himself a nice role on last year's team as a punishing back between the tackles and should keep that role this season. Dillon could be brought along slowly.

RECEIVERS Outside of tight end Michael Giacone and two backups at that position, every single tight end and wide receiver from last year will be back for 2017, so look for Brown (or whoever is throwing the ball) to have a wealth of options. Junior tight end Tommy Sweeney has a legitimate NFL future, while the team's top three wide receivers — Michael Walker, Jeff Smith and Charlie Callinan — are all back as well. What might push this group to the next level is if senior Thadd Smith gets over the drops that plagued his 2016 campaign. Overall, the Eagles might not have the fastest group of pass catchers, but there is plenty of size to make up for it.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN The nucleus of the line is no longer young, nor inexperienced. Senior Jon Baker (center) and juniors Chris Lindstrom (tackle) and Aaron Monteiro (guard/tackle) have plenty of starts under their belts. For the offense to reach its potential, those three have to anchor the unit and show some marked improvement, particularly in pass protection. Baker and Lindstrom have assumed leadership roles, while Monteiro's next step forward can make this unit more complete. The line gets a boost from grad transfer Marcell Lazard from West Virginia. With the injury to left guard Elijah Johnson (torn ACL), Lazard's arrival allows for some shuffling and a key reinforcement. Look for Monteiro to slide to left guard and Lazard to assume the left tackle spot.

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|----------------------|
| Sept. 1 | at Northern Illinois |
| Sept. 9 | Wake Forest |
| Sept. 16 | Notre Dame |
| Sept. 23 | at Clemson |
| Sept. 30 | Central Michigan |
| Oct. 7 | Virginia Tech |
| Oct. 14 | at Louisville |
| Oct. 21 | at Virginia |
| Oct. 27 | Florida State |
| Nov. 11 | NC State |
| Nov. 18 | vs. Connecticut # |
| Nov. 25 | at Syracuse |

#Boston

KEY EAGLES

HAROLD LANDRY, DE Shocked many by returning for his senior year and will be an All-ACC and All-America candidate.

CONNOR STRACHAN, LB Leading tackler and local product is the centerpiece of what should be a strong defense.

TOMMY SWEENEY, TE At 6'5", 258 pounds, Sweeney (26 catches, three TDs) makes his presence felt both as a blocker and receiver.

KEY LOSSES

MATT MILANO, LB Paired with Strachan, Milano helped give the Eagles a terrific tandem of linebackers.

JOHN JOHNSON, FS The secondary was not a strong point for the Eagles last year, but Johnson still held that group together.

PATRICK TOWLES, QB No, Towles wasn't a dominant player for his position, but his loss means that the Eagles will have a new starting quarterback for the fourth straight season.

RISING STAR

With **Anthony Brown** expected to take over the starting quarterback position, the redshirt freshman from New Jersey will have a heap of pressure on him. But the 6'1", 210-pounder impressed in practices last year and has the benefit of an experienced supporting cast.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 5-7. 2-6 ACC

For the third time in four seasons under coach Steve Addazio, Boston College finished a season with seven wins. However, the Eagles lived on the edge last year, as they were outgained by 177.8 yards per game in conference play and won two ACC games by seven points or fewer. Defense was the strength of this team in 2016 and leads the way in 2017. End Harold Landry headlines a unit with seven returning starters and a pass rush that recorded 47 sacks in 2016. The offense averaged only 12.0 points in ACC games last year, and uncertainty remains at quarterback after the departure of Patrick Towles. A talented stable of running backs and four returning starters on the offensive line will have to carry the offense — and potentially the team's bowl hopes — once again.



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

HOMEGROWN STRUGGLES There were moments during the last recruiting cycle when the Eagles excelled at keeping the young, local talent at home. Other times, not so much. Either way, it remains a struggle. Flipping running back A.J. Dillon from Michigan was big, but players like athlete Ifeatu Melifonwu, the younger brother of NFL Scouting Combine and UConn star Obi Melifonwu, went to Syracuse. Michigan also had great success coming in and poaching top talent out of New England. The region does not always produce big-time recruits, but Steve Addazio has prioritized keeping them home with varying degrees of success.

WELCOME CONTINUITY During his tenure in Chestnut Hill, Addazio has had three offensive coordinators and two defensive coordinators. However, this season, there will be no changes at those two important positions, with Scot Loeffler calling the offense and Jim Reid leading the defense. While special teams coordinator and defensive line coach Al Washington left for the University of Cincinnati, the return of Loeffler and Reid has given BC some much-needed stability. Washington, though, is a big loss, especially in recruiting.

NEW STRATEGY Boston College has had problems developing quarterbacks under Addazio. To make up for it, the Eagles have looked at times to graduate transfers to fill in the gaps. Last year, it was Patrick Towles, who came over from Kentucky. Tyler Murphy did the same from Florida two years prior. With redshirt freshman Anthony Brown this year's likely starter and junior Darius Wade the potential backup, BC will have its own recruited players filling in the depth chart. The Eagles also signed two quarterbacks this recruiting cycle.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Steve Addazio

RECORD AT SCHOOL

24-27 (4 years)

CAREER RECORD

37-38 (6 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Scot Loeffler

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Jim Reid

LOCATION

Chestnut Hill, MA

STADIUM

Alumni Stadium (44,500)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



DE HAROLD
LANDRY



DEFENSIVE LINEMEN The Eagles had some nice pickups in recruiting at several positions. However, the biggest get in the offseason was defensive end Harold Landry, who spurned the NFL to return to Boston College for his senior season. Landry, who was initially projected to go in at least the top two rounds of the 2017 draft, recorded 16.5 sacks and 22 tackles for a loss in 2016 and should have a monster senior season. That position might be the most loaded on the entire team with juniors Zach Allen and Wyatt Ray coming back, as the two combined for 10.5 sacks last year. The loss of tackle Truman Gutapfel will hurt, but Noa Merritt returns to give the team a physical presence at nose guard. Overall, with Landry making a push to be the program's first first-round pick since Luke Kuechly in 2012, the defensive line remains a major strong point.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|----|------------------------|
| WR 3 | Michael Walker (Jr.) | 83 | Charlie Cattinan (Sr.) |
| WR 6 | Jeff Smith (Jr.) | 81 | Thadd Smith (Sr.) |
| LT | Marcell Lazard (Sr.) | 67 | Aaron Monteiro (Jr.) |
| LG 67 | Aaron Monteiro (Jr.) | 65 | Ryan Conte (Jr.) |
| C 77 | Jon Baker (Sr.) | 59 | Shane Leonard (Fr.) |
| RG 70 | John Phillips (So.) | 69 | Austin Stephens (Jr.) |
| RT 75 | Chris Lindstrom (Jr.) | 73 | Sam Schmal (Sr.) |
| TE 89 | Tommy Sweeney (Jr.) | 85 | Korab Idrizi (So.) |
| QB 13 | Anthony Brown (Fr.) | 4 | Darius Wade (Jr.) |
| RB 32 | Jon Hillman (Jr.) | 16 | Davon Jones (So.) |
| FB 46 | Jimmy Martin (So.) | 38 | Richard Wilson (Jr.) |

DEFENSE (7)

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------------|----|------------------------|
| DE 7 | Harold Landry (Sr.) | 11 | Wyatt Ray (Jr.) |
| DT 94 | Noa Merritt (Sr.) | 92 | Kevin Cohee (Jr.) |
| DT 96 | Ray Smith (Jr.) | 98 | Jack Kenny (Sr.) |
| DE 2 | Zach Allen (Jr.) | 11 | Wyatt Ray (Jr.) |
| OLB 49 | Kevin Bletzer (Jr.) | 26 | Sharrieff Grice (Jr.) |
| MLB 13 | Connor Strachan (Sr.) | 45 | Ethan Tucky (Fr.) |
| OLB 10 | Ty Schwab (Sr.) | 46 | Jimmy Martin (So.) |
| CB 20 | Isaac Yiadom (Sr.) | 14 | Gabriel McClary (Sr.) |
| CB 5 | Kamrin Moore (Sr.) | 21 | Lukas Denis (Jr.) |
| SS 8 | Will Harris (Jr.) | 25 | Mehdi El Attrach (So.) |
| FS 29 | Atem Ntantang (Sr.) | 25 | Mehdi El Attrach (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|------------------|------|----------------------|
| K 98 | Mike Knoll (Sr.) | KR 3 | Michael Walker (Jr.) |
| P 98 | Mike Knoll (Sr.) | PR 3 | Michael Walker (Jr.) |

LINEBACKERS He may not have the NFL hype surrounding him that Landry does, but in terms of his importance to the returning front seven, middle linebacker Connor Strachan holds a special significance for this defense and its prospects in 2017. The team's leading tackler in 2016 with 80, including 11 for a loss and 3.5 sacks, Strachan, a senior, is one of the top playmakers on the defense and a key reason why the Eagles were seventh in the nation and first in the ACC in defending the run last season. The big loss for the unit is Matt Milano, who, like Strachan, was valuable both defending the run and wreaking havoc on blitzes. But senior Ty Schwab returns, and look for junior Kevin Bletzer to emerge as another key piece. Especially given the strength of the line in front of them, the linebackers should again set the tone for a stingy front seven.

DEFENSIVE BACKS It's a good news/bad news situation for the Eagles' secondary. The good news is that the unit returns plenty of experience and most of its two-deep from 2016. The bad news is that the one starter it lost to graduation, free safety John Johnson,

was undoubtedly the defensive backfield's top player. Johnson, who was second on the team with 77 tackles and first with three interceptions, leaves a void at an important position, but there is enough coming back that overall improvement is possible. That shouldn't be too tough, as the Eagles were 75th in the nation in pass efficiency defense in 2016. Kamrin Moore and Isaac Yiadom are two seniors who give the Eagles solid experience at cornerback, as does Will Harris at strong safety. If the front seven can continue to stuff the run and force opponents into long-yardage situations on passing downs, the secondary can be more effective than it was in 2016.

SPECIALISTS The Eagles had a serious placekicking problem until Mike Knoll took over the duties last year, and he was solid, making 12-of-14 in 2016. Knoll also handles the punting duties. Myles Willis is gone as kick returner, and he proved to be a solid weapon, so Walker will take over and have fairly big shoes to fill. Tyler Rouse also leaves a hole at punt returner, but look for Walker to fill that role, too.

Scouting the EAGLES

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP BOSTON COLLEGE

"The thing with BC is they're a pressure team defensively, and they're going to just put constant pressure on you, take away the run game and dare you to beat them throwing the ball. If you can do that for 60 minutes, you can win. But if you miss, you may only get two possessions each quarter. So if you struggle on that first third down of the game, and then you don't get the next third down, you can be in a little bit of hot water. They know exactly who they are defensively, and it matches up perfectly for their offense. ... They've had legitimate players on defense. The kid from North Carolina (defensive end Harold Landry) could play for anyone in the country. They can drop him in coverage or have him come off the edge. ... They don't scare you much offensively. They try to get a couple play-action shots, get a jet sweep every once in a while. They just don't have the same kind of skill players that other schools in the league have, but they're very sound in what they do. They have to replace their quarterback which will be interesting. [Patrick] Towles played well for them all things considered."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 32.6 | 17 |
| DEFENSE | 31.1 | 100 |
| MARGIN | +1.5 | 50 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| OFFENSE | 32.1% | 128 |
| DEFENSE | 32.3% | 4 |
| MARGIN | -0.2% | 69 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.4 | 126 |
| DEFENSE | 5.1 | 25 |
| MARGIN | -0.7 | 99 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 3.7 | 123 |
| DEFENSE | 4.8 | 92 |
| MARGIN | -1.1 | 123 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| PROJECTED | 4.8 | 28 |
| ACTUAL | 7 | 24 |
| MARGIN | +2.2 | 43 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

32.1 The Eagles' offensive success rate was a paltry 32.1 percent, dead last in FBS. Meanwhile, on defense they allowed just a 32.3 percent success rate, fourth lowest in the country. That 50-50 split led to a 50-50 (regular-season) record.

32.6 BC's average possession started at the 32.6, the 17th-best field position in FBS and second best in the ACC. The Eagles' offense did average 3.2 more points per game than in 2016, but BC was still just 118th in scoring offense.

22.8 Havoc rate is a team's tackles for a loss, forced fumbles, and passes defended divided by total defensive plays. The Eagles' havoc rate rose from 22.5 to 22.8 percent — second only to former BC coordinator Don Brown's Michigan defense.

2017 BOSTON COLLEGE ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 13 Brown, Anthony | 6-1/210 | Fr. | Cliffwood, NJ |
| 14 Fadule, John | 6-0/207 | Jr. | Wellesley, MA |
| 11 Grosel, Dennis | 6-1/210 | Fr. | Wiloughby, OH |
| 8 Perry, EJ | 6-2/195 | Fr. | Andover, MA |
| 4 Wade, Darius | 6-0/211 | Jr. | Middletown, DE |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|----------|-----|-----------------|
| 47 Cardinal, Colton | 6-3/234 | Jr. | Franklin, MA |
| 32 Hilliman, Jon | 6-0/229 | Jr. | Plainfield, NJ |
| 16 Jones, Davon | 5-10/214 | So. | Worcester, MA |
| 35 Levy, Travis | 5-11/190 | Fr. | Olney, MD |
| 46 Martin, Jimmy | 5-11/220 | So. | Winter Park, FL |
| 38 Wilson, Richard | 5-10/224 | Jr. | Southfield, MI |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 82 Borgersen, Nolan | 6-2/204 | So. | Westwood, NJ |
| 83 Callinan, Charlie | 6-4/239 | Sr. | Westfield, NJ |
| 15 Flutie, Troy | 6-0/182 | Jr. | Natick, MA |
| 81 Garrison, Chris | 6-3/237 | So. | Goffstown, NH |
| 19 Glines, Ben | 6-2/209 | So. | Cincinnati, OH |
| 17 Hegarty, Aidan | 6-1/191 | Fr. | Bluffton, SC |
| 27 McStravick, Christian | 6-3/199 | Fr. | Katy, TX |
| 1 Robinson, Elijah | 6-0/197 | Jr. | Montclair, NJ |
| 6 Smith, Jeff | 6-1/192 | Jr. | St. Petersburg, FL |
| 81 Smith, Thadd | 5-9/181 | Sr. | Yeadon, PA |
| 39 Strader, Andrew | 5-9/155 | So. | Newport Beach, CA |
| 3 Walker, Michael | 6-0/195 | Jr. | Naples, FL |
| 9 White, Kobay | 6-1/187 | Fr. | Harrisburg, PA |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 84 Burt, Jake | 6-3/253 | So. | Lynnfield, MA |
| 85 Idrizi, Korab | 6-3/228 | So. | Fort Lee, NJ |
| 86 Marten, Ray | 6-3/253 | So. | Belle Harbor, NY |
| 89 Sweeney, Tommy | 6-5/258 | Jr. | Ramsey, NJ |
| 91 Vitiello, Joseph | 6-3/262 | Jr. | Bridgewater, NJ |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 77 Baker, Jon | 6-3/298 | Sr. | Millis, MA |
| 65 Conte, Ryan | 6-4/294 | Jr. | Somerville, MA |
| 57 Fish, Eddy | 6-6/295 | Fr. | South Boston, MA |
| 76 Johnson, Elijah | 6-5/310 | So. | Severn, MD |
| 55 Knopfke, Wyatt | 6-4/300 | So. | Bradenton, FL |
| 78 Kowalkowski, Tom | 6-4/302 | Fr. | Plymouth, MI |
| Lazard, Marcell | 6-6/311 | Sr. | Bloomfield, NJ |
| 59 Leonard, Shane | 6-1/278 | Fr. | Marshfield, MA |
| 72 Lindstrom, Alec | 6-4/240 | Fr. | Dudley, MA |
| 75 Lindstrom, Chris | 6-4/298 | Jr. | Dudley, MA |
| 67 Monteiro, Aaron | 6-7/305 | Jr. | Brockton, MA |
| 66 Palazzolo, Anthony | 6-5/301 | So. | Fairfield, CT |
| 70 Phillips, John | 6-6/301 | So. | Phoenix, NY |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------|-----|-----------------|
| 79 Ragan, Sean | 6-4/298 | Fr. | Westborough, MA |
| 73 Schmal, Sam | 6-7/309 | Sr. | Atlanta, GA |
| 69 Stevens, Austin | 6-3/289 | Jr. | Montclair, NJ |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 2 Allen, Zach | 6-5/272 | Jr. | New Canaan, CT |
| 44 Barlow, Brandon | 6-3/226 | Fr. | Cohoes, NY |
| 92 Cohee, Kevin | 6-2/274 | Jr. | Chestnut Hill, MA |
| 95 Hill, Taylor | 6-0/254 | Fr. | Pickerington, OH |
| 48 Karafa, Tanner | 6-3/260 | So. | Ashburn, VA |
| 98 Kenny, Jack | 6-3/275 | Sr. | Baltimore, MD |
| 99 Korutz, Adam | 6-2/296 | Fr. | Johnson City, NY |
| 7 Landry, Harold | 6-3/250 | Sr. | Spring Lake, NC |
| 94 Merritt, Noa | 6-0/277 | Sr. | Sparta, NJ |
| 90 Morais, Bryce | 6-4/265 | Fr. | Grayson, GA |
| 11 Ray, Wyatt | 6-3/249 | Jr. | Boca Raton, FL |
| 96 Smith, Ray | 6-1/292 | Jr. | Carlsbad, CA |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 43 Bletzer, Curt | 6-1/192 | Fr. | Medfield, MA |
| 49 Bletzer, Kevin | 6-2/213 | Jr. | Medfield, MA |
| 26 Grice, Sharrieff | 6-1/224 | Jr. | Naugatuck, CT |
| 33 Lamot, John | 6-0/227 | Fr. | Graham, NC |
| 51 Miranda, Isaiah | 6-0/243 | Fr. | Boston, MA |
| 52 Richardson, Max | 6-0/230 | So. | Duluth, GA |
| 50 Rodier, Yeoud | 6-1/225 | Fr. | Manchester, MA |
| 10 Schwab, Ty | 6-0/229 | Sr. | Merritt Island, FL |
| 13 Strachan, Connor | 6-0/237 | Sr. | Wellesley, MA |
| 45 Tucky, Ethan | 6-1/235 | Fr. | Delaware, OH |
| 56 Zavri, Mark | 6-0/220 | Jr. | Andover, MA |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|----------|-----|----------------------|
| 4 Cheevers, Hamp | 5-10/144 | So. | Trenton, FL |
| 21 Denis, Lukas | 5-11/186 | Jr. | Everett, MA |
| 25 El Attrach, Mehdi | 6-0/194 | So. | Orlando, FL |
| 39 Galvin, Jack | 6-0/195 | Sr. | Lowell, MA |
| 8 Harris, Will | 6-2/202 | Jr. | Suwanee, GA |
| 14 McClary, Gabriel | 6-3/204 | Sr. | Orlando, FL |
| 5 Moore, Kamrin | 5-11/195 | Sr. | District Heights, MD |
| 29 Ntantang, Atem | 5-11/195 | Sr. | Purcellville, VA |
| 17 Palmer, Mike | 6-1/178 | Fr. | Endwell, NY |
| 34 Tijani, Timi | 6-1/185 | Jr. | Greencastle, PA |
| 24 Torres, Taj-Amir | 5-9/177 | Jr. | Amherst, MA |
| 20 Yiadom, Isaac | 6-1/190 | Sr. | Worcester, MA |

| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 95 Carlson, Grant (P) | 6-0/180 | Fr. | Missouri City, TX |
| 98 Knoll, Mike (K/P) | 6-0/202 | Sr. | Copley, OH |
| 44 Levere, James (K/P) | 6-1/200 | Jr. | West Hartford, CT |
| 99 Lichtenberg, Colton (K) | 5-10/186 | Jr. | Savannah, GA |
| 42 Pilachowski, Kyle (K/P) | 6-0/185 | Fr. | Westford, MA |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 2-6 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|---------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | vs. Georgia Tech # | L | 14-17 |
| Sept. 10 | vs. Massachusetts % | W | 26-7 |
| Sept. 17 | at Virginia Tech | L | 0-49 |
| Sept. 24 | Wagner | W | 42-10 |
| Oct. 1 | Buffalo | W | 35-3 |
| Oct. 7 | Clemson | L | 10-56 |
| Oct. 22 | Syracuse | L | 20-28 |
| Oct. 29 | at NC State | W | 21-14 |
| Nov. 5 | Louisville | L | 7-52 |
| Nov. 11 | at Florida State | L | 7-45 |
| Nov. 19 | Connecticut | W | 30-0 |
| Nov. 26 | at Wake Forest | W | 17-14 |
| Dec. 26 | vs. Maryland & | W | 36-30 |

#Dublin, Ireland %Foxboro &Quick Lane Bowl



JON HILLIMAN

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|------------------|-----|-----|-------|----|-----|
| Patrick Towles | 273 | 138 | 1,730 | 12 | 7 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Jon Hilliman | 184 | 542 | 2.9 | 6 | |
| Davon Jones | 91 | 361 | 4.0 | 2 | |
| Myles Willis | 49 | 301 | 6.1 | 1 | |
| Patrick Towles | 115 | 294 | 2.6 | 4 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Michael Walker | 33 | 420 | 12.7 | 4 | |
| Jeff Smith | 27 | 395 | 14.6 | 3 | |
| Tommy Sweeney | 26 | 353 | 13.6 | 3 | |
| Charlie Callinan | 24 | 286 | 11.9 | 1 | |

KICKING: Mike Knoll, 12-14 FGs, 27-30 XPs, 63 points

TACKLES: Connor Strachan, 80; John Johnson, 77

SACKS: Harold Landry, 16.5

INTERCEPTIONS: John Johnson, 3

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 20.4 ppg | 13 | 118 |
| Rushing | 149.1 ypg | 10 | 96 |
| Passing | 143.8 ypg | 13 | 120 |
| Total | 292.8 ypg | 14 | 127 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 25.0 ppg | 9 | 44 |
| Rushing | 108.5 ypg | 1 | 7 |
| Passing | 205.6 ypg | 4 | 34 |
| Total | 314.2 ypg | 2 | 9 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| +7 | +0.54 | 3 | 24 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|----------------------|-----|----------|---------------------|
| Patrick Brown | TE | 6-5/230 | Rancho Santa Fe, CA |
| A.J. Dillon | RB | 6-0/240 | New London, CT |
| Nathaniel Emer | DL | 6-5/250 | Marilla, NY |
| Tate Haynes | ATH | 6-1/180 | San Diego, CA |
| Noah Jordan-Williams | WR | 6-1/200 | Cicero, NY |
| Travis Levy | RB | 5-11/190 | Olney, MD |
| CJ Lewis | ATH | 6-4/200 | Hamden, CT |
| Alec Lindstrom | OL | 6-4/240 | Dudley, MA |
| Hunter Long | TE | 6-5/230 | Exeter, NH |
| Matthew McDonald | QB | 6-2/195 | Mission Viejo, CA |
| Isaiah McDuffie | LB | 6-2/200 | Buffalo, NY |

| | | | |
|-------------------|----|----------|------------------|
| Drew McQuarrie | TE | 6-6/225 | Weare, NH |
| Jahmin Muse | DB | 6-2/195 | Elizabeth, NJ |
| E.J. Perry | QB | 6-2/195 | Andover, MA |
| Benjamin Petrula | OL | 6-5/300 | Freehold, NJ |
| TJ Rayam | DT | 6-1/300 | Alabaster, AL |
| Brandon Sebastian | DB | 6-1/185 | West Haven, CT |
| Ben Stewart | DB | 5-11/205 | Indianapolis, IN |
| Caleb Stoneburner | WR | 6-3/195 | Dublin, OH |
| Paul Theobald Jr. | LB | 6-2/200 | Caldwell, NJ |
| Marcus Valdez | DE | 6-1/245 | Perth Amboy, NJ |

The big emphasis was on quarterbacks, and the Eagles signed two as well as two others who played the position in high school but will likely play another at BC. Early enrollee E.J. Perry was an ultra-productive signal caller out of Andover, Mass., while Matthew McDonald out of Mission Viejo, Calif., was a strong late addition. Obviously, the big get was flipping running back A.J. Dillon from Michigan. The Eagles have been hit or miss with letting local talent get away under Steve Addazio, but Dillon, a New London, Conn., native who attended Lawrence Academy in Groton, Mass., was a major pull at a position where the Eagles have done fairly well lately. The Eagles also landed what they hope to be one of Connor Strachan's eventual replacements at middle linebacker in Paul Theobald. The class was not highly rated, but it was an improvement on the 2016 class and filled some needs.



CLEMSON TIGERS

National Forecast: **7** /// ACC Atlantic Prediction: **2**

It took 35 years, but Clemson found its way back to the top of college football's mountain. Deshaun Watson's touchdown pass to Hunter Renfrow gave the Tigers their first national title since 1981. Now an even bigger challenge — staying atop the mountain — lies ahead. Dabo Swinney and his staff must reload an offense that suffered significant losses and maintain a defense that has emerged as one of the nation's best under Brent Venables' guidance.

Swinney, naturally, is only looking ahead. "We're not defending a national championship — we don't talk about that — we're chasing another one," he told reporters before spring practice began. "We're attacking and trying to go just like every other team out there. Last year's over. That was an unbelievable experience and journey, but there's a lot of pieces from that team that aren't here."

To repeat as national champions, the Tigers will expect more from a number of talented reserves who'll be pushed into far more prominent roles.

QUARTERBACKS Clemson's biggest question this fall is obvious: How do you replace Watson? In three seasons, Watson etched his legacy as one of the program's all-time greats with his arm, legs and leadership. He was the Heisman Trophy runner-up and the first player in FBS history to pass for 4,000 yards and rush for 1,000 in the same season. Three players spent the spring battling to replace him: junior Kelly Bryant, redshirt freshman Zerrick Cooper and early enrollee Hunter Johnson. Bryant finished spring as the favorite to start. He served as the third-stringer in 2016, throwing just nine passes and one touchdown. But he has the mobility that the offense demands as well as a solid arm. Can he avoid turnovers and keep the role? We'll see. He'll be pushed hard by Cooper, who is also a dual-threat passer, as well as Johnson, a five-star signee who might have the best arm out of all three and can also work with his legs. The eventual starter won't have a huge leash and must quickly develop chemistry with a mostly new group of receivers and running backs around him.

RUNNING BACKS Wayne Gallman's early NFL Draft departure leaves a major hole in the backfield. Gallman was a bell cow for the offense, rushing for 1,133 yards and 17 touchdowns. No returning back had more than 221 yards or 47 carries in 2016. Multiple backs likely will be relied on to carry the load this fall. Junior C.J. Fuller rushed for 211 yards in 2016 and has one career rushing touchdown, and should get the first shot at starting. At 5'10", 215 pounds, Fuller isn't a between-the-tackles blaster, but he has good speed on the edge as well as experience. Sophomore Tavien Feaster is the group's most talented back, with excellent speed and game-breaking ability. He needs to improve without the ball, including pass blocking, to get on the field more consistently than he did last fall. Converted option quarterback Adam Choice provides depth and will see his share of carries as a reserve behind Fuller and Feaster.

RECEIVERS Clemson faces significant challenges in replacing three of its top four receivers, including Mike Williams (98 catches for 1,361 yards and 11 touchdowns) and one of the nation's top tight ends in Jordan Leggett. The Tigers can lean on a deep, fast group of reserves to fill the void. Deon Cain has struggled with consistency and discipline issues but is ready to break out after a 38-catch, 724-yard, nine-score sophomore year. He is a speedy deep threat and the clear top receiver. Renfrow is a former walk-on who comes up big in the biggest moments; he had 15 catches and two touchdowns in the College Football Playoff, capped by the biggest catch in program history. Ray-Ray McCloud, with a similar skill set to Artavis Scott, will see an expanded role and has built strength to take on extra responsibility. Trevion Thompson and Diondre Overton are ready for larger roles as well, and freshmen Tee Higgins and Amari Rodgers could both see meaningful snaps immediately. No returning tight end had more than two catches in 2016. There's no ready-made successor for Leggett, who was a major downfield threat.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN The offensive line will be a calming influence for Clemson. Four of five starters return from 2016, with the only loss graduated center Jay Guillermo, a key leader in 2016. Coaches are comfortable with junior Justin Falcinelli stepping into the role. He had 174 snaps over 11 games as a sophomore. Junior left tackle Mitch Hyatt is the line's rock. He's started all but one game over the last two seasons and

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Sept. 2 | Kent State |
| Sept. 9 | Auburn |
| Sept. 16 | at Louisville |
| Sept. 23 | Boston College |
| Sept. 30 | at Virginia Tech |
| Oct. 7 | Wake Forest |
| Oct. 13 | at Syracuse |
| Oct. 28 | Georgia Tech |
| Nov. 4 | at NC State |
| Nov. 11 | Florida State |
| Nov. 18 | The Citadel |
| Nov. 25 | at South Carolina |

KEY TIGERS

MITCH HYATT, LT A rock on the Tigers offensive line, Hyatt is an All-ACC pick who has started 29 of his 30 career games.

CHRISTIAN WILKINS, DT A versatile and nasty player who fits in at end or tackle and can even catch a pass if needed.

DEXTER LAWRENCE, DT An NFL-ready force who bedeviled opposing offensive lines and piled up 9.0 tackles for a loss as a freshman.

KEY LOSSES

DESHAUN WATSON, QB Clemson's leader and the Heisman Trophy runner-up; his presence and skills will be sorely missed.

WAYNE GALLMAN, RB A powerful, speedy back who was a highly dependable rusher and key offensive piece.

MIKE WILLIAMS, WR Caught 98 passes for 1,361 yards and 11 touchdowns. ACC DBs are happy to see this beast turn pro.

RISEING STAR

It was something of a surprise when **Shaq Smith** redshirted last fall; he was a top-80 national recruit per 247Sports. But the year to develop should serve him well this fall. Smith will make an impact at strong-side linebacker and has the versatility to thrive at multiple defensive positions.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 10-2, 6-2 ACC

The Tigers will try to do what only one team (Alabama) has done since 1998: repeat as national champions. But in order to reach the CFB Playoff for the third consecutive year, Dabo Swinney's team has to overcome significant personnel losses. Replacing quarterback Deshaun Watson is the top concern, but Clemson also loses standout linebacker Ben Boulware and four key skill players on offense. Swinney has recruited at a high level, which should minimize the drop-off on both sides of the ball. With a standout defense still in place, how quickly the Tigers settle the three-man battle to replace Watson will decide how high this team can climb in the rankings. The September slate — Auburn, at Louisville and at Virginia Tech — will provide an early barometer for Swinney's rebuilding effort. **Postseason: Orange Bowl vs. Penn State**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

WELCOME TO DABOLAND Clemson's facilities have come a long way since Tommy Bowden admitted he was embarrassed to show recruits the Tigers' locker room. This spring, the school opened a \$55 million operations facility that includes a bowling alley, mini-golf course, slide and, of course, sparkling offices and locker rooms.

WILL BRENT BOLT? One of Dabo Swinney's best moves was luring Brent Venables away from Oklahoma following the 2011 season to become the Tigers' defensive coordinator. Venables has built one of the nation's best defenses, a key in the rise to national prominence. And don't be surprised if he hangs around Clemson for a good while. He received a raise to \$1.7 million annually, making him the nation's second-highest-paid assistant. Venables' family loves the Upstate, and his son, a linebacker, just committed to the Tigers. He can afford to be picky.

QUARTERBACK SHUFFLE AHEAD? Clemson lost one of the nation's best players in quarterback Deshaun Watson, but Swinney and his staff have plenty of reserves in the wings. Early enrollee Hunter Johnson is a five-star prospect and a top-30 national recruit, and he could challenge for the starting role this fall. Incoming freshman Chase Brice is a four-star prospect. And Clemson also has a commitment from 2018's top overall recruit in quarterback Trevor Lawrence.

ACC GETS CLEMSON-FSU RIGHT Clemson-Florida State is always one of the most crucial games on the ACC and national schedule. So its timing on the schedule is important. The ACC got it right this season with FSU's visit to Clemson on Nov. 11. It's late enough to give the winner a boost in the CFP rankings, but early enough that the loser can potentially still recover for a playoff push. It's smart overall.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Dabo Swinney

RECORD AT SCHOOL

89-28 (8+ years)

CAREER RECORD

89-28 (8+ years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS

Tony Elliott, Jeff Scott

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Brent Venables

LOCATION

Clemson, SC

STADIUM

Clemson Memorial Stadium (81,500)

5-YEAR WIN TREND

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| 11 | 11 | 10 | 14 | 14 |
| CHICK-FILA BOWL 2012 | ORANGE BOWL 2013 | RUSSELL ATHLETIC BOWL 2014 | CFP NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME 2015 | CFP NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME 2016 |



DT **CHRISTIAN WILKINS**



is one of the nation's top tackles and a future NFL player. Taylor Hearn and Tyrone Crowder formed a solid guard tandem last fall; Crowder was a first-team All-ACC selection alongside Hyatt. Maverick Morris can slide in at either spot if needed. He started three games in 2015, and backup tackle Tremayne Anchrum is also capable of starting.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN A loaded, deep defensive line played a huge role in the title run, and don't expect much to change this fall thanks to a sturdy group of returning starters. Graduated defensive tackle Carlos Watkins takes a team-best 10.5 sacks with him to the NFL, but a drop-off is unlikely. Junior Christian Wilkins, who had 13.0 tackles for a loss last fall, will move back inside after a season at end to form one of the nation's best tackle tandems alongside Dexter Lawrence, who looked NFL-ready as a true freshman. Defensive end Clelin Ferrell will be a pass-rushing monster if he can capitalize on a breakout College Football Playoff, and Austin Bryant should start opposite him after redshirting with a foot injury. Scott Pagano's departure as a graduate transfer hurts the tackle depth, but Albert Huggins will eat up his snaps. Richard Yeargin and Chris Register provide punch at end behind Ferrell and Bryant.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

| | | | | |
|----|----|-------------------------|----|------------------------|
| WR | 8 | Deon Cain (Jr.) | 1 | Trevion Thompson (Jr.) |
| WR | 34 | Ray-Ray McCloud (Jr.) | 17 | Cornell Powell (So.) |
| WR | 13 | Hunter Renfrow (Jr.) | 18 | T.J. Chase (Fr.) |
| LT | 75 | Mitch Hyatt (Jr.) | 73 | Tremayne Anchrum (So.) |
| LG | 51 | Taylor Hearn (Jr.) | 74 | John Simpson (So.) |
| C | 50 | Justin Falcinelli (Jr.) | 59 | Gage Cervenka (So.) |
| RG | 55 | Tyrone Crowder (Sr.) | 69 | Maverick Morris (Sr.) |
| RT | 76 | Sean Pollard (So.) | 72 | Blake Vinson (Fr.) |
| TE | 80 | Milan Richard (Jr.) | 84 | Cannon Smith (Jr.) |
| QB | 2 | Kelly Bryant (Jr.) | 15 | Hunter Johnson (Fr.) |
| RB | 27 | C.J. Fuller (Jr.) | 28 | Tavien Feaster (So.) |

DEFENSE (7)

| | | | | |
|-----|----|-------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| DE | 99 | Clelin Ferrell (So.) | 49 | Richard Yeargin (Jr.) |
| DT | 42 | Christian Wilkins (Jr.) | 67 | Albert Huggins (Jr.) |
| DT | 90 | Dexter Lawrence (So.) | 44 | Nyles Pinckney (Fr.) |
| DE | 91 | Austin Bryant (Jr.) | 45 | Chris Register (Jr.) |
| WLB | 47 | James Skalski (So.) | 5 | Shaqu Smith (Fr.) |
| MLB | 34 | Kendall Joseph (Jr.) | 57 | Tre Lamar (So.) |
| SLB | 6 | Dorian O'Daniel (Sr.) | 30 | Jalen Williams (Jr.) |
| CB | 1 | Trayvon Mullen (So.) | 2 | Mark Fields (Jr.) |
| CB | 31 | Ryan Carter (Sr.) | 29 | Marcus Edmond (Sr.) |
| S | 23 | Van Smith (Jr.) | 15 | Korin Wiggins (Sr.) |
| S | 19 | Tanner Muse (So.) | 12 | K'Von Wallace (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | | | |
|---|----|-------------------|----|----|-----------------------|
| K | 92 | Greg Huegel (Jr.) | KR | 27 | C.J. Fuller (Jr.) |
| P | 48 | Will Spiers (Fr.) | PR | 34 | Ray-Ray McCloud (Jr.) |

redshirt freshman Shaqu Smith could push for time at one of the other two spots.

DEFENSIVE BACKS Clemson does have some questions in its secondary after losing a pair of first-team All-ACC selections to graduation. Cornerback Cordrea Tankersley was a key leader for the group with a team-leading 11 pass breakups, and safety Jadar Johnson developed into a very dependable leader who finished with 61 tackles and five interceptions. Senior Ryan Carter will likely start this fall at corner. He is a proven reserve who needs more time in the spotlight. Sophomore Trayvon Mullen is expected to start opposite him after emerging as an answer during the spring. Mark Fields is the top reserve, and senior Marcus Edmond provides solid depth. Van Smith returns as the starting free safety, and sophomore Tanner Muse is poised to start at strong safety.

SPECIALISTS Greg Huegel returns as one of the ACC's most reliable kickers after hitting 14-of-19 field goals and 71-of-73 extra points. Clemson needs to find a punter as well as a new long snapper and holder. Will Spiers, Michael Batson and Carson King competed this spring to replace the steady Andy Teasdall. McCloud, Fuller and Feaster will provide speed in the kick return game.

Scouting the TIGERS

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP CLEMSON

"In my time in college football, I've played a lot of people, but that Clemson team last year, dadgum, they were so good, and their staff does a damn good job. They have creative ways to get people touches, and if you're a good player, you will touch the ball. With [defensive coordinator Brent] Venables, you wonder how he gets it installed week to week because he changes so much and he morphs. They really copycat what stops you. So if somebody else gave you fits with something, you were going to see it when you play Clemson, and not a lot of people do that. ... Now they'll steal your signals. People don't want to talk about it, but the teams that gave them fits were NC State and Pitt because they huddled. I don't think that's a coincidence. It's not a very well-kept secret, but it didn't matter. They could have told us what was coming on every play and they would have whipped us. ... Their defensive front is a problem. They grow 'em on trees, but they develop too. Dexter Lawrence, I hope he decides to take the next two years off. ... They're alright in the secondary, but they grab better than anyone else."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 32.0 | 21 |
| DEFENSE | 28.5 | 43 |
| MARGIN | +3.5 | 23 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|--------|------|
| OFFENSE | 47.6% | 7 |
| DEFENSE | 32.9% | 6 |
| MARGIN | +14.7% | 3 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 6.2 | 34 |
| DEFENSE | 4.6 | 5 |
| MARGIN | +1.6 | 13 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.9 | 25 |
| DEFENSE | 3.7 | 14 |
| MARGIN | +1.2 | 8 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| PROJECTED | 4.2 | 34 |
| ACTUAL | -1 | 71 |
| MARGIN | -5.2 | 107 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness--yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

8.2 The Tigers' average third-down distance to go was 6.2 yards, ninth lowest in the country. Meanwhile, opponents faced an average distance of 8.2 yards, sixth most. This two-yard margin was second best in FBS.

4.9 The Tigers averaged 4.9 passes per game of 20-plus yards, fifth in the country. How much will that explosiveness dissipate without Deshaun Watson, Mike Williams (13.9 ypc), and Jordan Leggett (16.0 ypc)?

-5.2 Based on averages for fumble recoveries and the ratio of interceptions to passes broken up, Clemson's turnover margin should have been about plus-4.2. Instead, it was minus-1. Turnovers are usually worth about five points in field position lost and gained. That's 26 points Clemson lost to randomness.

2017 CLEMSON ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 2 Bryant, Kelly | 6-3/215 | Jr. | Calhoun Falls, SC |
| 6 Cooper, Zerrick | 6-2/205 | Fr. | Jonesboro, GA |
| 10 Israel, Tucker | 5-10/180 | So. | Orlando, FL |
| 15 Johnson, Hunter | 6-4/200 | Fr. | Brownsburg, IN |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|----------|-----|-----------------|
| 26 Choice, Adam | 5-9/210 | Jr. | Thomasville, GA |
| 28 Feaster, Tavien | 5-11/210 | So. | Spartanburg, SC |
| 27 Fuller, C.J. | 5-10/215 | Jr. | Easley, SC |
| 21 Rencher, Darien | 5-8/190 | Fr. | Anderson, SC |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 8 Cain, Deon | 6-1/210 | Jr. | Tampa, FL |
| 18 Chase, T.J. | 6-1/175 | Fr. | Plant City, FL |
| 83 Groomes, Carter | 5-8/180 | Fr. | Central, SC |
| 37 Mac Lain, Ryan | 5-8/175 | So. | Plymouth, IN |
| 34 McCloud, Ray-Ray | 5-10/180 | Jr. | Tampa, FL |
| 14 Overton, Diondre | 6-5/200 | So. | Greensboro, NC |
| 17 Powell, Cornell | 6-0/200 | So. | Greenville, NC |
| 13 Renfrow, Hunter | 5-11/180 | Jr. | Myrtle Beach, SC |
| 20 Swinney, Jack | 5-8/160 | Sr. | Lawrenceville, GA |
| 35 Thomason, Ty | 5-11/220 | So. | Greenville, SC |
| 1 Thompson, Trevion | 6-2/200 | Jr. | Durham, NC |
| 81 Tuttle, Kanyon | 5-10/170 | So. | Charlotte, NC |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|---------|-----|--------------|
| 11 Bell, Shadell | 6-1/220 | So. | Decatur, GA |
| 25 Chalk, J.C. | 6-2/235 | Fr. | Argyle, TX |
| 87 Greenlee, D.J. | 6-1/245 | Sr. | Clemson, SC |
| 80 Richard, Milan | 6-3/260 | Jr. | Savannah, GA |
| 84 Smith, Cannon | 6-5/265 | Jr. | Columbia, SC |
| 44 Williams, Garrett | 6-3/245 | Jr. | Orlando, FL |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|----------------------|
| 73 Anchrum, Tremayne | 6-2/290 | So. | Powder Springs, GA |
| 60 Bevelle, Kelby | 6-2/265 | Sr. | Apopka, FL |
| 59 Cervinka, Gage | 6-3/305 | So. | Greenwood, SC |
| 55 Crowder, Tyrone | 6-2/340 | Sr. | Marston, NC |
| 50 Falcinelli, Justin | 6-4/315 | Jr. | Middletown, MD |
| 77 Giella, Zach | 6-5/300 | So. | Lincolnton, GA |
| 64 Godfrey, Pat | 6-2/270 | So. | Greenlawn, NY |
| 71 Green, Noah | 6-5/290 | So. | Boiling Springs, SC |
| 51 Hearn, Taylor | 6-5/325 | Jr. | Williston, SC |
| 75 Hyatt, Mitch | 6-5/295 | Jr. | Suwanee, GA |
| 69 Morris, Maverick | 6-4/305 | Sr. | Brexford, GA |
| 70 Penner, Seth | 6-3/320 | So. | Naples, FL |
| 76 Pollard, Sean | 6-5/315 | So. | Jackson Springs, NC |
| 78 Reeves, Chandler | 6-7/280 | Fr. | McDonough, GA |
| 79 Ryan, Matthew | 6-2/320 | Fr. | New Orleans, LA |
| 74 Simpson, John | 6-4/315 | So. | North Charleston, SC |
| 62 Stewart, Cade | 6-3/290 | Fr. | Six Mile, SC |
| 72 Tisch, Logan | 6-2/300 | So. | Chapel Hill, NC |
| 72 Vinson, Blake | 6-5/300 | Fr. | Ocala, FL |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------|---------|-----|------------|
| 61 Bevelle, Kaleb | 6-3/265 | Sr. | Apopka, FL |
| 91 Bryant, Austin | 6-4/265 | Jr. | Pavo, GA |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|----------------------|
| 7 Davis, Lasamuel | 6-4/210 | Fr. | Bamberg, SC |
| 99 Ferrell, Clelin | 6-5/265 | So. | Richmond, VA |
| 67 Huggins, Albert | 6-3/305 | Jr. | Orangeburg, SC |
| 93 Johnson, Sterling | 6-4/305 | So. | Clayton, NC |
| 22 Kelly, Xavier | 6-4/265 | Fr. | Wichita, KS |
| 90 Lawrence, Dexter | 6-5/340 | So. | Wake Forest, NC |
| 44 Pinckney, Nyles | 6-1/295 | Fr. | Beaufort, SC |
| 45 Register, Chris | 6-3/255 | Jr. | Browns Summit, NC |
| 50 Robinson, Jabril | 6-2/265 | Jr. | Leland, NC |
| 42 Wilkins, Christian | 6-4/310 | Jr. | Springfield, MA |
| 49 Yeargin, Richard | 6-5/260 | Jr. | Lauderdale Lakes, FL |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|----------|-----|----------------|
| 33 Davis, J.D. | 6-2/225 | Jr. | Clemson, SC |
| 36 Davis, Judah | 6-1/235 | Jr. | Clemson, SC |
| 34 Joseph, Kendall | 6-0/230 | Jr. | Belton, SC |
| 57 Lamar, Tre | 6-3/240 | So. | Roswell, GA |
| 46 Magwood, Jarvis | 5-11/215 | Jr. | Greenville, SC |
| 6 O'Daniel, Dorian | 6-1/215 | Sr. | Olney, MD |
| 54 Rudolph, Logan | 6-3/225 | Fr. | Rock Hill, SC |
| 41 Sekas, Connor | 6-2/220 | Jr. | Vienna, VA |
| 47 Skalski, James | 6-0/235 | So. | Sharpsburg, GA |
| 43 Smith, Chad | 6-4/235 | So. | Sterling, VA |
| 5 Smith, Shaq | 6-2/240 | Fr. | Baltimore, MD |
| 10 Spector, Baylon | 6-1/220 | Fr. | Calhoun, GA |
| 53 Upshaw, Regan | 5-11/220 | Fr. | Bradenton, FL |
| 30 Williams, Jalen | 5-10/215 | Jr. | Columbia, SC |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|----------|-----|---------------------|
| 31 Carter, Ryan | 5-9/180 | Sr. | Grayson, GA |
| 32 Cote, Kyle | 5-10/180 | So. | Six Mile, SC |
| 9 Dawkins Jr., Brian | 5-7/175 | Fr. | Parker, CO |
| 29 Edmond, Marcus | 6-0/175 | Sr. | Hopkins, SC |
| 2 Fields, Mark | 5-10/180 | Jr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 37 Jackson, Austin | 6-2/200 | So. | Cary, NC |
| 14 Johnson, Denzel | 6-0/195 | So. | Columbia, SC |
| 40 Morton, Hall | 5-8/170 | Fr. | Birmingham, AL |
| 1 Mullen, Trayvon | 6-2/185 | So. | Fort Lauderdale, FL |
| 19 Muse, Tanner | 6-2/220 | So. | Belmont, NC |
| 39 Scott, Cameron | 5-10/210 | Jr. | Florence, SC |
| 11 Simmons, Isaiah | 6-3/220 | Fr. | Olathe, KS |
| 23 Smith, Van | 5-11/195 | Jr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 38 Trapp, Amir | 5-8/160 | So. | Clemson, SC |
| 24 Turner, Nolan | 6-1/195 | Fr. | Vestavia Hills, AL |
| 12 Wallace, K'Von | 6-0/190 | So. | Richmond, VA |
| 15 Wiggins, Korrin | 6-0/200 | Sr. | Durham, NC |

| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------------|----------|-----|----------------|
| 96 Batson, Michael (P) | 5-10/200 | So. | Central, SC |
| 39 Groomes, Christian (K) | 5-10/185 | Jr. | Central, SC |
| 92 Huegel, Greg (K) | 5-11/195 | Jr. | Blythewood, SC |
| 97 King, Carson (P) | 6-0/215 | So. | Nashville, TN |
| 58 Phibbs, Patrick (LS) | 6-2/200 | So. | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 47 Spence, Alex (K) | 6-1/195 | Jr. | Florence, SC |
| 52 Spence, Austin (LS) | 6-2/195 | So. | Florence, SC |
| 48 Spiers, Will (P) | 6-5/230 | Fr. | Cameron, SC |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 14-1, 7-1 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|----------------------|--------|-------|
| Sept. 3 | at Auburn | W | 19-13 |
| Sept. 10 | Troy | W | 40-34 |
| Sept. 17 | South Carolina State | W | 59-0 |
| Sept. 22 | at Georgia Tech | W | 26-7 |
| Oct. 1 | Louisville | W | 42-36 |
| Oct. 7 | at Boston College | W | 56-10 |
| Oct. 15 | NC State | (ot) W | 24-17 |
| Oct. 29 | at Florida State | W | 37-34 |
| Nov. 5 | Syracuse | W | 54-0 |
| Nov. 12 | Pittsburgh | L | 42-43 |
| Nov. 19 | at Wake Forest | W | 35-13 |
| Nov. 26 | South Carolina | W | 56-7 |
| Dec. 3 | vs. Virginia Tech # | W | 42-35 |
| Dec. 31 | vs. Ohio State % | W | 31-0 |
| Jan. 9 | vs. Alabama \$ | W | 35-31 |

#Orlando %Fiesta Bowl: CFB Playoff Semifinal
\$CFB Playoff National Championship



RAY-RAY MC CLOUD

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | COMP | YDS | TD | INT |
|----------------|-----|------|-------|----|-----|
| Deshaun Watson | 579 | 388 | 4,593 | 41 | 17 |

| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD |
|----------------|-----|-------|-----|----|
| Wayne Gallman | 232 | 1,133 | 4.9 | 17 |
| Deshaun Watson | 166 | 626 | 3.8 | 9 |

| | | | | |
|----------------|----|-----|-----|---|
| Tavien Feaster | 37 | 221 | 6.0 | 2 |
| C.J. Fuller | 47 | 211 | 4.5 | 0 |

| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD |
|-----------------|-----|-------|------|----|
| Mike Williams | 98 | 1,361 | 13.9 | 11 |
| Artavis Scott | 76 | 614 | 8.1 | 5 |
| Ray-Ray McCloud | 49 | 472 | 9.2 | 2 |
| Jordan Leggett | 46 | 736 | 16.0 | 7 |
| Hunter Renfrow | 44 | 495 | 11.2 | 6 |

KICKING: Greg Huegel, 14-19 FGs, 71-73 XPs, 113 points

TACKLES: Ben Boulware, 131; Kendall Joseph, 124

SACKS: Carlos Watkins, 10.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Jadar Johnson, 5

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 39.2 ppg | 3 | 14 |
| Rushing | 169.7 ypg | 6 | 71 |
| Passing | 333.9 ypg | 1 | 7 |
| Total | 503.7 ypg | 2 | 12 |

| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 18.0 ppg | 1 | 10 |
| Rushing | 129.6 ypg | 6 | 24 |
| Passing | 181.9 ypg | 2 | 14 |
| Total | 311.5 ypg | 1 | 8 |

| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|----------|-----|----------|
| -1 | -0.07 | 8 | 71 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|--------------------|----|----------|----------------|
| Matt Bockhorst | OL | 6-5/300 | Cincinnati, OH |
| Chase Brice | QB | 6-3/200 | Loganville, GA |
| Noah DeHond | OL | 6-7/315 | Rochester, NY |
| Travis Etienne Jr. | RB | 5-11/210 | Jennings, LA |
| Justin Foster | LB | 6-4/245 | Shelby, NC |
| Tee Higgins | WR | 6-4/190 | Oak Ridge, TN |
| Hunter Johnson | QB | 6-4/200 | Brownsburg, IN |
| Amari Rodgers | WR | 5-10/195 | Knoxville, TN |

| | | | |
|------------------------|----|---------|--------------------|
| Logan Rudolph | LB | 6-3/225 | Rock Hill, SC |
| Baylon Spector | LB | 6-1/220 | Calhoun, GA |
| Will Swinney | WR | 5-9/175 | Clemson, SC |
| A.J. Terrell | DB | 6-2/180 | Atlanta, GA |
| Blake Vinson | OL | 6-5/300 | Ocala, FL |
| Jordan Williams | DL | 6-5/260 | Virginia Beach, VA |
| LeAnthony Williams Jr. | DB | 6-0/175 | Atlanta, GA |

Clemson's 2017 class was one of the smallest in Dabo Swinney's tenure, due to a small senior class and lack of attrition. But the 15-signee group made up for a lack of size with star power. The Tigers have become a national brand and can be picky about whom they target. The class is led by five-star quarterback Hunter Johnson, an early enrollee who is the nation's No. 2 quarterback and No. 30 overall prospect, per 247Sports. The Tigers' strong wide receiver tradition also received a talent infusion with five-star signee Tee Higgins, the nation's No. 2 wideout, and four-star prospect Amari Rodgers. Tailback Travis Etienne, a late addition to the class, could also contribute immediately. Four-star cornerback A.J. Terrell brings size and coverage ability to the secondary, and defensive ends Justin Foster and Jordan Williams could be the latest in a long line of talented pass rushers on Clemson's defensive line.



FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES

National Forecast: 3 /// ACC Atlantic Prediction: 1

Not all 10–3 seasons are created equal, and Jimbo Fisher certainly found that out in 2016. One year after receiving praise for winning 10 games in what was supposed to be a rebuilding season, Fisher and his staff got heat for posting the same mark last fall. The reason for the consternation, of course, was heightened expectations that come with a top-five preseason ranking — expectations that came crashing down in a 63–20 thrashing at Louisville and then a pair of heartbreaking home losses to North Carolina and Clemson.

That is the backdrop for a 2017 campaign that once again will begin with ample hype. The Seminoles return nearly their entire defense from a year ago, as well as talented quarterback Deondre Francois and some dynamic skill players on offense. Add in a neutral-site season opener against Alabama, and the Seminoles again will start this season with sky-high aspirations.

QUARTERBACKS After passing for 3,350 yards and 20 touchdowns as a redshirt freshman, Francois likely will take on an even larger role this season. Gone is star tailback Dalvin Cook, top wide receiver Travis Rudolph, standout left tackle Rod Johnson and two other offensive starters. Fortunately for FSU, Fisher believes Francois is the type of quarterback he can build his offense around. “The year he had, this guy’s a big-time player,” says Fisher, whose first three quarterbacks at Florida State — Christian Ponder, EJ Manuel and Jameis Winston — all went on to be first-round NFL Draft picks. As a sophomore, Francois will need to process reads quicker and get the ball out of his hands earlier; some of the staggering 36 sacks FSU surrendered last season were a result of his indecision. He also will look to improve upon his completion percentage (58.7), and the Seminoles likely will rely more on his running skills. The biggest trick for FSU will be keeping Francois upright. The 6’2”, 205-pounder missed parts of several games last season after taking vicious hits in the pocket, and the Seminoles no longer have a proven backup. Junior J.J. Cosentino has not been impressive in limited duty, and the other two scholarship quarterbacks will be true freshmen Bailey Hockman and James Blackman.

RUNNING BACKS The loss of a school’s all-time leading rusher would deal a painful blow to most college football programs. Not Florida State. At least not this year. The Seminoles might not have another Dalvin Cook on their roster, but they do possess a wealth of talent at the position. Junior Jacques Patrick, who can be a battering ram at 6’2”, 231 pounds, averaged 5.7 yards as a backup last season and already has a pair of 100-yard games to his credit. He will be pushed by freshman Cam Akers, regarded by some as the nation’s top prep back in the 2017 signing class. Sophomore Amir Rasul and highly touted freshman Khalan Laborn also will battle for carries.

RECEIVERS FSU began transitioning to a new-look receiver corps midway through last fall, and by the start of the 2017 season, it will be a complete overhaul. Juniors Nyqwan Murray and Auden Tate emerged as Francois’ top weapons late last season and both possess unique talents; Tate is a huge target at 6’5”, 225, and he saw six of his 25 receptions go for touchdowns, while Murray is a dynamic playmaker who could become the star of the Seminoles’ offense. Murray caught only two passes in the Seminoles’ Orange Bowl victory against Michigan, but both went for touchdowns — a 92-yarder early and then a 12-yard game-winner in the final minute. The Seminoles will need third and fourth receivers to step up, with the most likely candidates being sophomore Keith Gavin and junior Da’Vante Phillips. Both are physically gifted; yet Phillips has just five career catches, and Gavin has none.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN If there’s one position that must come through in a big way for the Seminoles to make it back to the College Football Playoff, this would be it. The offensive line play was dismal for much of last season, leading to Francois being sacked or hit dozens of times, and the Seminoles then lost Johnson as an early entrant for the NFL Draft. Left guard Kareem Are also graduated, and right guard Wilson Bell transferred. That leaves FSU in rebuilding mode up front, at a time when the Seminoles also are breaking in new running backs and wide receivers. Other than senior right tackle Rick Leonard, there’s not one position on the line that has a certain starter in place. Cole Minshew and Landon Dickerson are the likely starters at guard, but Dickerson is coming back from a torn ACL and Minshew has battled injuries since he arrived on campus. Junior Alec Eberle has started 19 games

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Sept. 2 | vs. Alabama # |
| Sept. 9 | UL Monroe |
| Sept. 16 | Miami |
| Sept. 23 | NC State |
| Sept. 30 | at Wake Forest |
| Oct. 14 | at Duke |
| Oct. 21 | Louisville |
| Oct. 27 | at Boston College |
| Nov. 4 | Syracuse |
| Nov. 11 | at Clemson |
| Nov. 18 | Delaware State |
| Nov. 25 | at Florida |

#Atlanta, GA

KEY SEMINOLES

DERWIN JAMES, DB Brings great versatility, with the ability to play safety, cornerback and also come off the edge as a pass rusher.

DERRICK NNADI, DT Even with a nagging ankle injury, he led FSU’s interior linemen with 49 tackles, 10.5 for a loss.

DEONDRE FRANCOIS, QB As a redshirt freshman, beat out a fifth-year senior for the starting job and racked up more than 3,500 yards of total offense.

KEY LOSSES

DALVIN COOK, RB Holds the school’s top two single-season rushing performances and is FSU’s career rushing leader despite playing only three years.

DEMARCUS WALKER, DE Broke out with 10.5 sacks as a junior in 2015 and then blew that mark away with 16.0 sacks as a senior.

ROD JOHNSON, LT Started since midway through his freshman season and won the ACC Jacobs Blocking Trophy, given to the conference’s top offensive linemen, as a sophomore and junior.

RIISING STAR

He might not be in the starting lineup for the season opener against Alabama, but freshman tailback **Cam Akers** will almost certainly be a key weapon in the Seminoles’ running game. Akers drew raves all spring for his playmaking ability and toughness.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 12-1, 8-0 ACC

The Seminoles fell short of preseason expectations last year, but Jimbo Fisher’s team is loaded for another run at the CFB Playoff. The addition of five-star recruit Cam Akers and development of Jacques Patrick alleviates the departure of standout running back Dalvin Cook. Depth at receiver and the play of the line remain concerns, but quarterback Deondre Francois should ensure that this unit is one of the best in the ACC. After giving up 34 or more points in each of their first four games against FBS opponents, the Seminoles played better on defense in the second half of the 2016 season. With nine starters back, this unit should improve on last year’s totals. Additionally, more help is on the way with the return of safety Derwin James from injury. **Postseason: National Semifinal vs. Ohio State**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

STANDING PAT After a brutal first half of the 2016 season, during which the Seminoles gave up at least 34 points in each of their first four games against FBS opponents (including 63 at Louisville), many fans clamored for either the firing of defensive coordinator Charles Kelly or other changes on the defensive staff. In the end, Jimbo Fisher blocked out that chatter and decided to stick with the staff he had in place. If the defense doesn't play well from the get-go this fall, there's a good chance the fans will begin directing their ire at Fisher for not heeding their concerns.

FEWER DISTRACTIONS FSU's administration loved the exposure the university received from Showtime's "A Season With" series, which aired weekly episodes chronicling the Seminoles' 2016 season. The show wasn't as popular with the Seminoles players and staff members, many of whom acknowledged privately that it was a constant distraction and might have played into some of the team's chemistry issues.

UNEXPECTED RETURN In a blast from the past, former FSU quarterbacks coach Dameyune Craig returned to Fisher's staff in time for spring practice. Craig, who spent the past few years at Auburn and then LSU, is serving as an offensive analyst, meaning he will not be an on-field coach. Instead, he will break down game film and help Fisher with practice preparations, while also doing some in-office recruiting.

MORE TOUGHNESS Fisher made no apologies about putting his players through a tougher-than-usual month of spring practice. "I was hell this spring," Fisher says, noting that he devoted more time to full-contact drills and even made his quarterbacks "live" for contact on occasion. Says Fisher: "There's a time in football where ... somehow you've got to line up and butt somebody in the mouth."

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Jimbo Fisher

RECORD AT SCHOOL

78-17 (7 years)

CAREER RECORD

78-17 (7 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS

Lawrence Dawsey, Randy Sanders

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Charles Kelly

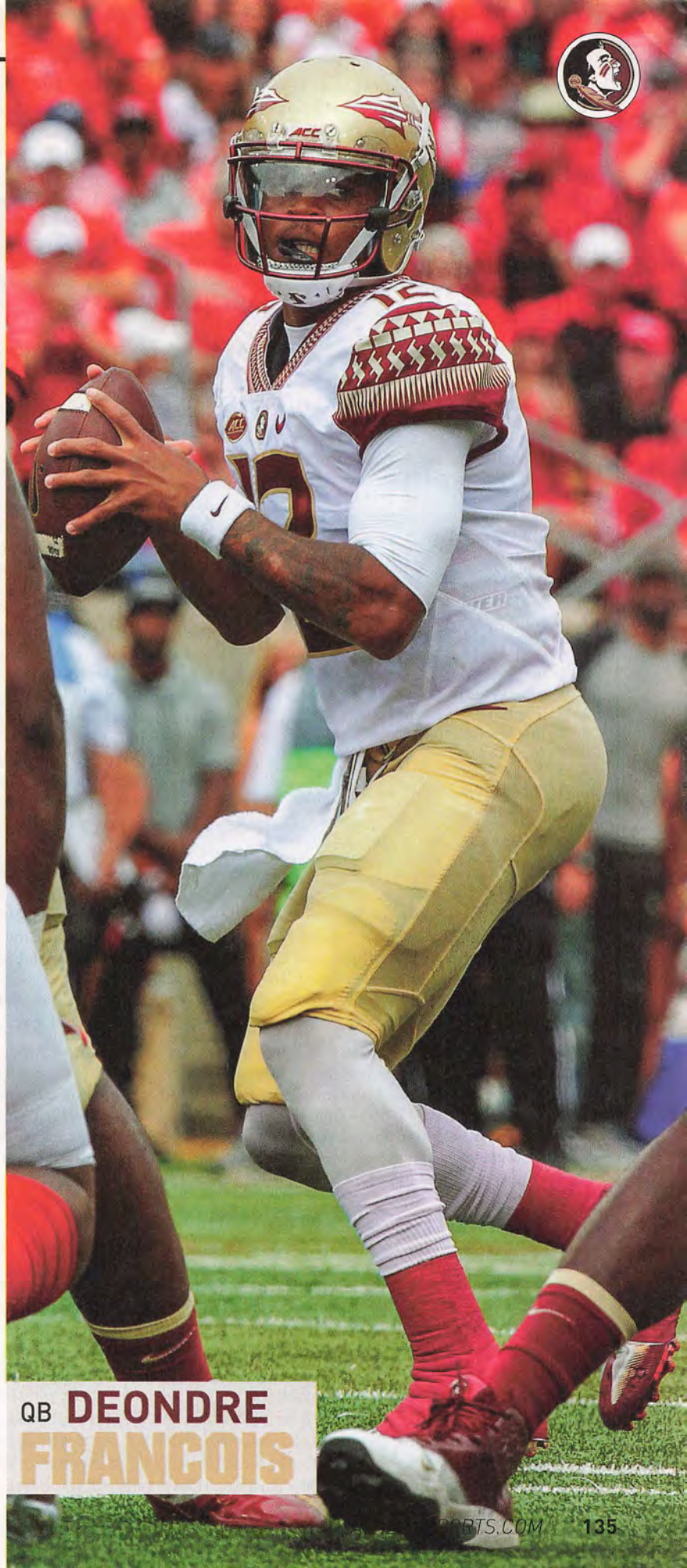
LOCATION

Tallahassee, FL

STADIUM

Doak Campbell Stadium (79,560)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



QB **DEONDRE FRANCOIS**



at center over the past two seasons, but his inconsistent play will lead to an open battle with redshirt freshmen Baveon Johnson and Andrew Boselli. Another redshirt freshman, Josh Ball, is the likely starter at left tackle. Depending on how things shake out at center, there's a chance Dickerson (with seven starts) could be the Seminoles' most experienced lineman.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Three returning starters provide the nucleus of what could be one of the nation's deepest defensive line rotations. Senior Derrick Nnadi and junior Demarcus Christmas, returning starters at tackle, both check in at around 310 pounds and are athletic for their size. Nnadi ranked fifth on the team with 49 tackles in 2016, including 10.5 tackles for a loss and six sacks. At defensive end, the Seminoles must fill a huge void left by DeMarcus Walker (16 sacks),

but junior Josh Sweat and sophomore Brian Burns combined for 16.5 sacks of their own. Sweat is a third-year starter and Burns is the odds-on choice to replace Walker. The Seminoles believe they have enough quality depth to go three-deep at all four spots across the line. The plan will be to rotate frequently and wear down opposing offenses.

LINEBACKERS After experiencing growing pains early last season, starters Matthew Thomas and Ro'Derrick Hoskins settled in and played well down the stretch. Thomas was particularly impressive in late wins against Florida and Michigan; he recorded a career-high 15 tackles against the Wolverines in the Orange Bowl. If Hoskins isn't careful, he could be challenged for the middle linebacker spot by sophomore Dontavious Jackson. This is the first time in years that the Seminoles should have adequate depth at this position. A wild card could be senior Jacob Pugh, who has played mostly defensive end when the Seminoles go to their 3-4 front. Pugh earned Defensive MVP honors in the spring, and Fisher says they may use him more as an outside linebacker in their 4-3 scheme.

DEFENSIVE BACKS With defensive coordinator Charles Kelly frequently using nickel and dime packages against spread offenses, it's no

accident that FSU is loaded in the secondary. All-America safety Derwin James returns from a season-ending knee injury last September to lead the group, and he is joined by several other safeties with starting experience — seniors Nate Andrews, Trey Marshall and Ermon Lane — as well as veteran reserves A.J. Westbrook and Calvin Brewton. Junior Tarvarus McFadden (tied for the national lead with eight interceptions in '16) emerged as a star in his first year as a starting cornerback, and the Seminoles have several options for the spot vacated by Marquez White. Leading candidate Kyle Meyers was a spring game star, recording a 28-yard interception return for a TD.

SPECIALISTS The good news is that the Seminoles return placekicker Ricky Aguayo and punter Logan Tyler. The bad news is that both were extremely inconsistent as freshmen. Aguayo, the younger brother of former Lou Groza Award winner Roberto Aguayo, was perfect on all 12 kicks inside the 40 but only 7-of-14 from that point and beyond. Tyler averaged a pedestrian 40.3 yards per punt and seldom delivered great hang time. FSU's coaches were encouraged, however, by his improvement in the spring. In an effort to provide more punch to the return game, the Seminoles tinkered in the spring with using James in that role.

Scouting the SEMINOLES

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP FLORIDA STATE

"They're going to be really good. Getting Derwin James back off the injury solidifies their defense. The biggest limitation is at linebacker, but Matthew Thomas can be as good as there is in the country. ... Offensively, they're very average up front, especially losing Rod Johnson early, which I know caught their staff by surprise. They're not as good on the offensive line as they were a few years ago, and you saw that with how many times [QB Deondre Francois] got hit last year. He took a beating and he just kept getting up and showed tremendous courage. From an ability standpoint, he's got the whole package. If you're an NFL team, you probably wish he was 6'4", but his arm talent is tremendous. As tough as he is, they have to be concerned with keeping him healthy because their No. 2 QB is a big question mark. ... At running back, people are going to see they got a special guy in Cam Akers. I think he's every bit as fast as Dalvin Cook, but he's probably a more fluid athlete. Cook had that acceleration, but I think Akers in the long run can do more things, catching the ball out of the backfield, more natural fit for that offense. I think he can be good right off the bat."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE 29.2 | 77 |
| DEFENSE 30.3 | 89 |
| MARGIN -1.1 | 87 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | RANK |
|-------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE 44.8% | 21 |
| DEFENSE 35.1% | 18 |
| MARGIN +9.7% | 12 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE 6.5 | 23 |
| DEFENSE 5.3 | 37 |
| MARGIN +1.2 | 20 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE 4.9 | 32 |
| DEFENSE 4.2 | 43 |
| MARGIN +0.7 | 28 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| PROJECTED -6.7 | 117 |
| ACTUAL 3 | 41 |
| MARGIN +9.7 | 6 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

9.7 FSU had a 44.8 percent success rate on offense and allowed a 35.1 percent success rate. That plus-9.7 rate ranked 12th in the country. Staying on schedule and preventing opponents from doing the same is a direct path to wins.

87 FSU was 3-2 in one-possession games in part because of a field-position margin that ranked 87th in FBS (12th in the ACC). The Noles ranked 77th in punt return average, 89th in punting and 127th in punt return average allowed.

7.8 When things went awry for the FSU offense, they went off the rails. The Noles' average third-down distance was 7.8 yards, 116th in FBS. They moved the chains plenty on first and second down, but sudden stagnation was a problem.

2017 FLORIDA STATE ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | | | |
|----------------------|---------|----------|---------------------|
| HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN | |
| 16 Cosentino, J.J. | 6-4/230 | Jr. | Lower Burrell, PA |
| 12 Francois, Deondre | 6-2/205 | So. | Orlando, FL |
| 10 Hockman, Bailey | 6-2/187 | Fr. | Powder Springs, GA |
| 14 Rizzo, Jake | 6-0/193 | Fr. | Fort Lauderdale, FL |

| RUNNING BACKS | | | |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|---------------------|
| HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN | |
| 3 Akers, Cameron | 5-11/213 | Fr. | Clinton, MS |
| 43 Duff, Jacob | 6-0/184 | So. | North Ft. Myers, FL |
| 7 Green, Ryan | 5-11/204 | Fr. | St. Petersburg, FL |
| 37 Middleton, Blaik | 5-10/194 | So. | Hutchinson, KS |
| 35 Nabers, Gabe | 6-3/244 | So. | Hahira, GA |
| 9 Patrick, Jacques | 6-2/231 | Jr. | Orlando, FL |
| 33 Plante, Colton | 6-2/236 | Jr. | Windermere, FL |
| 22 Rasul, Amir | 5-10/196 | So. | Miami, FL |
| 26 Vickers, Johnathan | 6-1/228 | Jr. | Quincy, FL |

| RECEIVERS | | | |
|------------------------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN | |
| 11 Campbell, George | 6-4/207 | So. | Clearwater, FL |
| 89 Gavin, Keith | 6-3/225 | So. | Crawfordville, FL |
| 28 Henric Jr., Gilbert | 6-0/194 | So. | Miami, FL |
| 87 Jackson, Jared | 6-2/199 | Fr. | Monticello, FL |
| 83 LaCivita, Bryan | 6-1/178 | Sr. | Gainesville, FL |
| 86 Motlow, Justin | 5-11/183 | Jr. | Tampa, FL |
| 8 Murray, Nyqwan | 5-11/176 | Jr. | Orlando, FL |
| 5 Phillips, Da'Vante | 6-1/206 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 18 Tate, Auden | 6-5/225 | Jr. | Irmo, SC |
| 27 Withers, Tyriq | 6-4/197 | Fr. | Jacksonville, FL |

| TIGHT ENDS | | | |
|--------------------|---------|----------|--------------------|
| HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN | |
| 49 Green, N'Namdi | 6-3/230 | Jr. | Tampa, FL |
| 81 Izzo, Ryan | 6-5/245 | Jr. | Highland Lakes, NJ |
| 36 Johnson, Eric | 6-5/225 | Fr. | Stuart, FL |
| 85 Kerr, Jeremy | 6-6/270 | Sr. | St. Petersburg, FL |
| 6 McKitty, Tre' | 6-4/235 | Fr. | Bradenton, FL |
| 88 Saunders, Mavin | 6-5/257 | Jr. | Bimini, Bahamas |
| 82 Upshur, Naseir | 6-2/249 | So. | Philadelphia, PA |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | | | |
|----------------------|---------|----------|--------------------|
| HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN | |
| 72 Arnold, Mike | 6-4/339 | Fr. | Winter Haven, FL |
| 79 Ball, Josh | 6-8/287 | Fr. | Fredericksburg, VA |
| 75 Bello, Abdul | 6-6/312 | So. | Warri, Nigeria |
| 60 Boselli, Andrew | 6-4/303 | Fr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 69 Dickerson, Landon | 6-5/310 | So. | Hickory, NC |
| 54 Eberle, Alec | 6-4/294 | Jr. | Mechanicsville, VA |
| 62 Frith, Ethan | 6-7/316 | Jr. | Summit, MS |
| 51 Johnson, Baveon | 6-3/326 | Fr. | Lakeland, FL |
| 74 Kelly, Derrick | 6-5/323 | Jr. | Quincy, FL |
| 76 Leonard, Rick | 6-7/306 | Sr. | Middletown, MD |
| 57 Martinez, Corey | 6-4/298 | Jr. | Tampa, FL |
| 70 Minshew, Cole | 6-5/338 | So. | Pridgen, GA |
| 53 Peters, Joshua | 6-3/274 | Jr. | Orlando, FL |
| 52 Robbins, David | 6-4/324 | So. | Glenelg, MD |
| 71 Ruble, Brock | 6-8/319 | Jr. | Charlotte Hall, MD |
| 68 Turnage, Greg | 6-3/283 | So. | Gainesville, FL |
| 73 Williams, Jauan | 6-6/300 | Fr. | Cheltenham, MD |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | | | |
|------------------------|---------|----------|---------------------|
| HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN | |
| 94 Aimé, Walvenski | 6-5/300 | Jr. | Boynton Beach, FL |
| 95 Bryant, Keith | 6-2/274 | Fr. | Delray Beach, FL |
| 99 Burns, Brian | 6-5/218 | So. | Fort Lauderdale, FL |
| 90 Christmas, Demarcus | 6-4/308 | Jr. | Sarasota, FL |
| 31 Dixon, Kris | 6-1/217 | So. | Tallahassee, FL |
| 55 Jones, Fredrick | 6-3/298 | Jr. | Miami, FL |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 13 Kaindoh, Joshua | 6-6/250 | Fr. | Baltimore, Md. |
| 98 Mertz, JT | 6-2/265 | Jr. | Savannah, GA |
| 91 Nnadi, Derrick | 6-1/312 | Sr. | Virginia Beach, VA |
| 11 Robinson, Janarius | 6-5/249 | Fr. | Panama City, FL |
| 97 Smallwood, Isaiah | 6-3/216 | Jr. | Dover, FL |
| 96 Smith, Justin | 6-3/265 | Fr. | Wewahatchka, FL |
| 9 Sweat, Josh | 6-5/250 | Jr. | Chesapeake, VA |
| 86 Taylor II, Darvin | 6-3/304 | So. | Chester, VA |
| 67 Torres, Adam | 6-4/281 | Jr. | Lake Mary, FL |
| 84 Wilkerson, Jalen | 6-4/273 | So. | Douglas, GA |
| 12 Williams, Arthur | 6-4/327 | Jr. | Waycross, GA |
| 39 Williams, Claudio | 6-0/255 | So. | Hialeah, FL |
| 49 Wood, Cedric | 6-3/321 | Fr. | Tallahassee, FL |

| LINEBACKERS | | | |
|------------------------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN | |
| 36 Barrett, Brandon | 6-1/230 | So. | Jupiter, FL |
| 51 Brown, Josh | 6-3/216 | So. | Charlotte, NC |
| 47 Garcia, Joseph | 6-2/210 | Fr. | Miami, FL |
| 18 Hoskins, Ro Derrick | 6-2/240 | Sr. | Orlando, FL |
| 5 Jackson, Dontavious | 6-2/249 | So. | Houston, TX |
| 30 Kilby-Lane, Sh'Mar | 6-2/219 | So. | West Park, FL |
| 48 Norwood, Vernon | 6-0/214 | Jr. | Jupiter, FL |
| 16 Pugh, Jacob | 6-4/229 | Sr. | Dade City, FL |
| 45 Purifoy, Delvin | 6-2/246 | Jr. | Cantonment, FL |
| 56 Rice, Emmett | 6-2/203 | So. | Miami Gardens, FL |
| 22 Thomas, Adonis | 6-3/228 | So. | Atlanta, GA |
| 6 Thomas, Matthew | 6-3/227 | Sr. | Miami, FL |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|---------------------|
| HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN | |
| 29 Andrews, Nate | 6-0/214 | Sr. | Fairhope, AL |
| 35 Barulich, Michael | 5-11/195 | So. | Orlando, FL |
| 15 Becker III, Carlos | 6-2/183 | So. | Kissimmee, FL |
| 10 Brewton, Calvin | 6-0/186 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 43 Butler, Jensen | 6-2/205 | Sr. | Mountainside, NJ |
| 32 Culmer, Array | 5-7/158 | Jr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 13 Dawsey Jr., Lawrence | 5-10/165 | Fr. | Tampa, FL |
| 14 Fagan, Cyrus | 6-2/180 | Fr. | Daytona Beach, FL |
| 33 House, Kameron | 5-10/185 | Fr. | Duluth, GA |
| 28 Jackson, Malique | 6-0/170 | Sr. | Jesup, GA |
| 3 James, Derwin | 6-3/211 | So. | Haines City, FL |
| 7 Lane, Ermon | 6-3/209 | Sr. | Homestead, FL |
| 24 Lewis, Marcus | 6-1/190 | Jr. | Washington, DC |
| 20 Marshall, Trey | 6-0/210 | Sr. | Lake City, FL |
| 4 McFadden, Tarvarus | 6-2/198 | Jr. | Fort Lauderdale, FL |
| 37 Meyers, Kyle | 6-0/168 | So. | New Orleans, LA |
| 46 Moschella III, John | 5-6/190 | So. | West Palm Beach, FL |
| 23 Paul, Herban | 6-2/191 | Sr. | Immokalee, FL |
| 38 Prouse-Lackey, Izaiah | 5-9/177 | Jr. | Atlanta, GA |
| 8 Samuels III, Stanford | 6-2/170 | Fr. | Pembroke Pines, FL |
| 26 Schergen, Joseph | 5-9/170 | Fr. | Loxahatchee, FL |
| 1 Taylor, Levonta | 5-10/169 | So. | Virginia Beach, VA |
| 41 Weber, Zachary | 6-0/190 | Fr. | Coral Springs, FL |
| 19 Westbrook, A.J. | 6-0/186 | Jr. | Daytona Beach, FL |

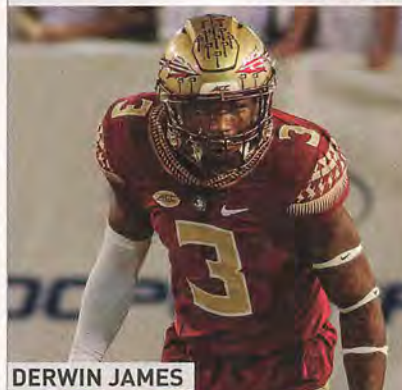
| SPECIALISTS | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN | |
| 63 Adkison, Tanner (LS) | 5-10/190 | Fr. | Tallahassee, FL |
| 23 Aguayo, Ricky (K) | 6-2/196 | So. | Mascotte, FL |
| 40 Burnham, Ken (LS) | 6-0/203 | Jr. | Lithia, FL |
| 47 Gabbard, Stephen (LS) | 6-2/248 | Sr. | Tallahassee, FL |
| 21 Tyler, Logan (K) | 6-0/201 | So. | Nixa, MO |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-3, 5-3 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|---------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 5 | vs. Ole Miss # | W | 45-34 |
| Sept. 10 | Charleston Southern | W | 52-8 |
| Sept. 17 | at Louisville | L | 20-63 |
| Sept. 24 | at South Florida | W | 55-35 |
| Oct. 1 | North Carolina | L | 35-37 |
| Oct. 8 | at Miami | W | 20-19 |
| Oct. 15 | Wake Forest | W | 17-6 |
| Oct. 29 | Clemson | L | 34-37 |
| Nov. 5 | at NC State | W | 24-20 |
| Nov. 11 | Boston College | W | 45-7 |
| Nov. 19 | at Syracuse | W | 45-14 |
| Nov. 26 | Florida | W | 31-13 |
| Dec. 30 | vs. Michigan % | W | 33-32 |

Orlando %Orange Bowl



DERWIN JAMES

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|------------------|-----|-------|-------|----|-----|
| Deondre Francois | 400 | 235 | 3,350 | 20 | 7 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Dalvin Cook | 288 | 1,765 | 6.1 | 19 | |
| Jacques Patrick | 61 | 350 | 5.7 | 4 | |
| Deondre Francois | 108 | 198 | 1.8 | 5 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Travis Rudolph | 56 | 840 | 15.0 | 7 | |
| Kermit Whitfield | 34 | 395 | 11.6 | 1 | |
| Dalvin Cook | 33 | 488 | 14.8 | 1 | |
| Jesus Wilson | 30 | 390 | 13.0 | 1 | |
| Nyqwan Murray | 27 | 441 | 16.3 | 5 | |
| Auden Tate | 25 | 409 | 16.4 | 6 | |

KICKING: Ricky Aguayo, 19-26 FGs, 51-52 XPs, 108 points

TACKLES: Matthew Thomas, 77; DeMarcus Walker, 68

SACKS: DeMarcus Walker, 16.0

INTERCEPTIONS: Tarvarus McFadden, 8

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 35.1 ppg | 4 | 31 |
| Rushing | 202.3 ypg | 4 | 40 |
| Passing | 264.1 ypg | 6 | 33 |
| Total | 466.4 ypg | 3 | 25 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 25.0 ppg | 9 | 44 |
| Rushing | 128.0 ypg | 5 | 21 |
| Passing | 221.1 ypg | 7 | 57 |
| Total | 349.1 ypg | 6 | 22 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| +3 | +0.23 | 5 | 42 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|----------------------|----|----------|----------------------|
| Cameron Akers | RB | 5-11/210 | Clinton, MS |
| James Blackman | QB | 6-5/185 | Belle Glade, FL |
| DeCalon Brooks | LB | 6-0/195 | Tampa, FL |
| Cory Durden | DT | 6-5/320 | Newberry, FL |
| Cyrus Fagan | S | 6-2/182 | Daytona Beach, FL |
| Bailey Hockman | QB | 6-3/206 | Powder Springs, GA |
| Joshua Kaindoh | DE | 6-6/240 | Baltimore, MD |
| Khalan Laborn | RB | 5-10/199 | Ocean Lakes, VA |
| Tre Lawson | DE | 6-6/248 | North Augusta, SC |
| Alex Marshall | TE | 6-7/240 | Andover, MA |
| D.J. Matthews | WR | 5-11/160 | Jacksonville, FL |
| Tre' McKitty | TE | 6-5/230 | Wesley Chapel, FL |
| Hamsah Nasirildeen | DB | 6-4/210 | Concord, NC |
| Ja'en Parks | DL | 6-4/304 | Newberry, FL |
| Stanford Samuels III | CB | 6-2/175 | Pembroke Pines, FL |
| Brady Scott | OL | 6-6/285 | Powder Springs, GA |
| Tamorriion Terry | WR | 6-4/208 | Ashburn, GA |
| Adonis Thomas | LB | 6-4/228 | Atlanta, GA |
| Leonard Warner | LB | 6-4/230 | Snellville, GA |
| Zaquandre White | RB | 6-0/210 | North Fort Myers, FL |
| Marvin Wilson | DT | 6-4/329 | Houston, TX |
| Ontaria Wilson | DB | 6-1/175 | Ashburn, GA |

Although Florida is a hotbed of talent for college recruiters, FSU actually signed more players from out of state (13) than it did in state (nine) this year. And when it came to hauling in elite recruits, the Seminoles did much more of their damage outside of Florida. FSU signed four five-star prospects in this class, according to Rivals, and all four are from other areas — defensive tackle Marvin Wilson hails from Texas, tailback Khalan Laborn is from Virginia, tailback Cam Akers is from Mississippi and defensive end Josh Kaindoh is from Maryland (by way of the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Fla.) The Seminoles appeared to fill all their needs with the exception of wide receiver.



LOUISVILLE CARDINALS

National Forecast: 18 /// ACC Atlantic Prediction: 3

Louisville's outlook remains as glorious and unsettled as it was last season. Don't be alarmed if that reads like a contradiction. It isn't.

Bobby Petrino greets a significant group of solid contributors from the 9-4 squad that brought ESPN's College GameDay to campus for the first time in school history, beat Florida State by 43 points and soared to No. 5 in the College Football Playoff rankings. Here is the rest of the story: That group lost its final three by an average of more than 16 points, including a jarring rivalry upset loss to Kentucky.

To improve, the Cardinals must stop fumbling (they lost 22, worst in the ACC), start protecting the quarterback (47 sacks, last in the ACC again) and improve their tackling while adjusting to a new defensive staff. With a 11 returning starters, the pieces are there for another solid season, which likely will result in another third-place finish behind Florida State and Clemson (the program they've yet to beat) in the rugged Atlantic Division. Improvement will depend on growth by the offensive line, which has been shaky in back-to-back seasons, a running game that features tailbacks as well as a dazzling quarterback and a healthy defense. The Cards are also scheduled for success, facing only one bowl team (Kentucky) in four non-conference games.

QUARTERBACKS Petrino starts with a sizable edge — the nation's most prolific quarterback, Lamar Jackson, the 2016 Heisman Trophy winner. As dazzling as Jackson was last season, running for 21 touchdowns, passing for 30 more and delivering more than 5,100 yards in total offense, Petrino needs him crank up his 56.2 completion percentage and eliminate moments like his three-interception game against Kentucky. Despite all his highlights, Petrino wants him to stop swinging for a six-run homer on every snap. "We're still working on throwing the ball away," Petrino says. "He still thinks he can run and make every single play." Rising senior Kyle Bolin opted to leave in the spring and will pursue another opportunity as a graduate transfer. Jawon Pass, a redshirt freshman, has a skill set similar to Jackson's and would get the call if the starter suffered an injury.

RUNNING BACKS The Cards began the season with a balanced rushing attack, but that approach disappeared down the stretch as Brandon Radcliff gained 496 of his 903 yards in the first five games. Radcliff is gone, likely to be replaced by Jeremy Smith, a larger, more powerful runner, but Smith missed significant time during the spring with an undisclosed injury. Nobody else ran for more than 145 yards, although Petrino likes Trey Smith. Keep an eye on Colin Wilson, a four-star recruit from Florida who arrives as the most touted U of L running prospect since Michael Bush. Petrino promises that converted QB Reggie Bonnafon will get carries in a hybrid role.

RECEIVERS Other than quarterback, this is the team's strongest unit, even with the loss of the top three receivers. Sophomore Seth Dawkins played like an emerging star during the spring, demonstrating excellent hands and the ability to make yards after the catch with his quickness and balance. Although Jaylen Smith caught only 27 balls last season, six were for touchdowns, including one that won the Virginia game in the final minute. He's got great rapport with Jackson. Bonnafon has the toughness to play in the slot or on the edge. Devante Peete has been solid for two seasons, and redshirt freshman Dez Fitzpatrick was considered a better prospect than Dawkins in the 2016 recruiting class because of his size and speed. At 5'7", Traveon Samuel does not look as if he belongs in the ACC, but he's explosive and understands how to disappear between linebackers and safeties. Micky Crum and Charles Standberry will share the tight end position — with Crum serving as the more powerful blocker and Standberry the choice in passing plays or the red zone.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Petrino acknowledged the issues on the offensive line by recruiting Mr. Fix-It — assistant coach Mike Summers — from Florida. Summers ran the line during the Cards' 2006 Orange Bowl season and served under Petrino at Arkansas, too. Summers used spring drills to experiment with the pieces, challenging guys to play multiple positions. Left tackle Geron Christian, a junior who has started every game since arriving in 2015, has the skills and toughness to lead. It's time for Lukayus McNeil to improve or be replaced because Jackson is too valuable to risk taking hits like the 22 sacks he suffered against Houston, Kentucky and LSU.

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Sept. 2 | vs. Purdue # |
| Sept. 9 | at North Carolina |
| Sept. 16 | Clemson |
| Sept. 23 | Kent State |
| Sept. 30 | Murray State |
| Oct. 5 | at NC State |
| Oct. 14 | Boston College |
| Oct. 21 | at Florida State |
| Oct. 28 | at Wake Forest |
| Nov. 11 | Virginia |
| Nov. 18 | Syracuse |
| Nov. 25 | at Kentucky |

#Indianapolis, IN

KEY CARDINALS

LAMAR JACKSON, QB Heisman Trophy winner was always one spin move from the end zone, accounting for 51 touchdowns — 30 passing and 21 rushing.

STACY THOMAS, LB Dynamic sideline-to-sideline force who finished second on the team in tackles, including 7.5 behind the line of scrimmage.

GERON CHRISTIAN, OT The junior is poised to lead an offensive line whose improvement is vital to the team's success.

KEY LOSSES

KEITH KELSEY, LB Three-year starter led the team in tackles; Bobby Petrino considered him a coach on the field.

JOSH HARVEY-CLEMONS, S Set the tone in the secondary with dependable, physical play, operating as a linebacker who was also a ball hawk.

COLE HIKUTINI, TE Became Jackson's most trusted receiver, especially in the red zone, turning eight of his 50 receptions into touchdowns.

RISING STAR

Seth Dawkins, a sophomore, was the name that coach Bobby Petrino mentioned after every spring scrimmage. Dawkins caught 11 passes as a freshman but made most of his contributions returning kicks. Petrino loves his ability to run crisp routes and make tacklers miss.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 9-3, 5-3 ACC

Lamar Jackson's return is enough to keep Louisville in the mix to win the Atlantic Division, but coach Bobby Petrino's team will need more than the reigning Heisman winner to pass Clemson or Florida State. An offensive line that surrendered 47 sacks last year remains a question mark. Additionally, the top three receivers (statistically) and running back Brandon Radcliff are gone. The defense finished second in the ACC in yards per play allowed (4.69) but will be under the direction of a new coordinator. The top priority for Peter Sirmon will be filling the voids in the front seven left behind by linebackers Keith Kelsey and Devante Fields and tackle DeAngelo Brown. A 10-win season is within reach, but Louisville is likely to finish behind Clemson and Florida State. **Postseason: Belk Bowl vs. Florida**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

SUITE SUCCESS Less than two decades after it opened, Papa John's Cardinal Stadium is undergoing its second renovation and expansion. The \$63 million project began last November and will be ready for the start of the 2017 season, enclosing the North end zone while adding 10,000 chairback seats and a dozen field-level suites.

STAFF SHAKEUP Four seasons into Bobby Petrino's second stint at U of L, only three coaches remain from Year 1. With the departure of coordinator Todd Grantham to Mississippi State, Petrino has turned the defense over to Peter Sirmon, whom he hired from Mississippi State. Sirmon will be assisted by Lorenzo Wade, who worked for Petrino at Arkansas.

ON THE MEND The U of L staff is working with three players recovering from gunshot wounds. Linebackers James Hearn (hand) and Henry Famurewa (foot) were shot in an off-campus incident last December and missed the team's bowl game. Defensive back Cornelius Sturghill missed the 2016 season after he was injured in a drive-by shooting in Memphis.

FAMILY AFFAIR Petrino has always credited his father, Bob, a former head coach at Carroll College in Montana, with developing his love of football — and Petrino is passing the tradition on. His youngest son, Nick, coaches the Cards' quarterbacks and helps develop the game plan, while his son-in-law L.D. Scott, a former U of L player, handles the defensive line and remains one of the program's top recruiters.

NATIONWIDE Howard Schnellenberger built the Louisville program primarily with guys from Kentucky, Illinois, Florida, Georgia and Alabama, but Charlie Strong and Petrino have taken a more national approach. The 2017 Cards will feature players from 16 states, including California, Texas, Iowa and South Carolina.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Bobby Petrino

RECORD AT SCHOOL

67-22 (7 years)

CAREER RECORD

109-43 (12 years)

CO-OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS

Lonnie Galloway, Mike Summers

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Peter Sirmon

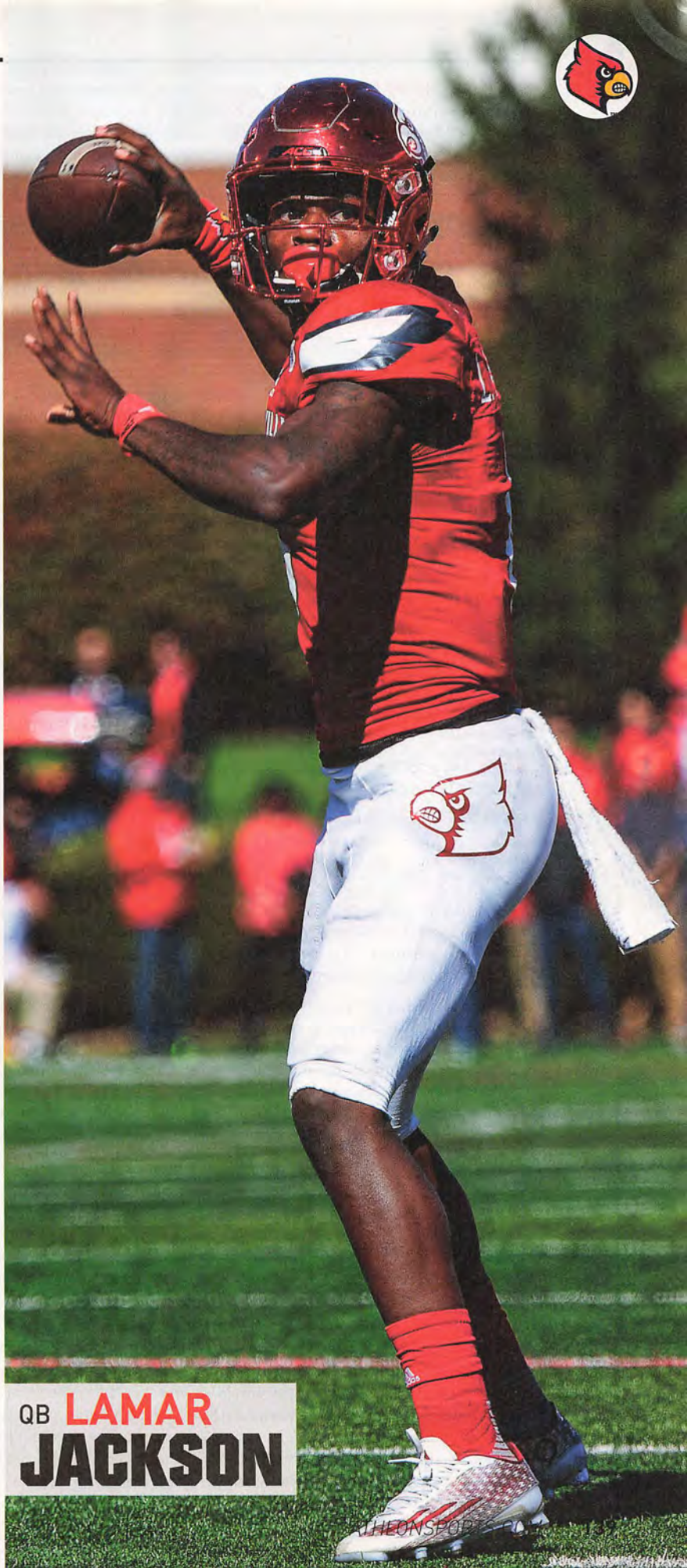
LOCATION

Louisville, KY

STADIUM

Papa John's Cardinal Stadium (55,000)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



QB **LAMAR JACKSON**

WILSONSPORTS



DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Most of the talented defensive linemen left by Charlie Strong are gone. So is Petrino's original defensive coordinator. In essence, the Cards traded coordinators with Mississippi State. Petrino hired former NFL linebacker Peter Sirmon, creating the opening that Todd Grantham filled. Drew Bailey will anchor a defensive line that has suffered significant losses to the NFL the last three seasons. He led the front with 58 tackles, and Petrino applauds his growth as a leader. Johnny Richardson and Kyle Shortridge have flashed ability but lack consistency. The Cards' depth is untested, making the line a primary area of concern.

LINEBACKERS This group has been a strength throughout the Petrino era, and that should not change. In his first season as a starter, Stacy Thomas emerged as the team's second-leading tackler, even after starting the year with a groin injury.

Thomas is an elite athlete with a competitive streak who is determined to make plays. Two developments will determine whether Louisville's linebackers can become a dominant group — the health of seniors James Hearn and Trevon Young. Hearn missed the Citrus Bowl after he was shot in the hand during an off-campus incident in early December. Young missed last season after undergoing hip surgery following the 2015 Music City Bowl. Both are better against the run and pressuring quarterbacks than they are defending the pass, but they can be difference makers when healthy. Jonathan Greenard's speed gives him the ability to play in space, and he contributed 22 tackles and an interception in limited time.

DEFENSIVE BACKS Sirmon was not the only important defensive change Petrino made. He hired Lorenzo Ward, a veteran coach with experience as a coordinator who also worked for Petrino at Arkansas. Wade will direct the secondary, another unit packed with veterans. But they are veterans who must improve against the better passing attacks after Louisville allowed 29 TD passes last season, most in the ACC. Jaire Alexander showed he was a tough, confident corner last season, the guy entrusted with covering the opponent's best receiver. He led U

of L in interceptions with five while contributing 39 tackles and playing with swagger. Trumaine Washington had issues at the other corner, getting beat deep and missing tackles. Improvement is essential. The Cards actually have a solid trio of safeties; sophomore Khane Pass was pressing Chucky Williams and Zykies Cannon at the Citrus Bowl.

SPECIALISTS Mason King will be pushed by Austin Johnson to hold his spot as the Cardinals' punter. Although King ranked second in the ACC with an average boot of 43.9 yards, Johnson has developed an ability to pin his punts inside the 10-yard line with precision and with a quicker release. With Jackson delivering all those touchdowns, Blanton Creque attempted only 19 field goals, making 16. Creque will also be asked to improve the strength of his kickoffs. Alexander is a sure-handed threat on punt returns, taking one for a touchdown while averaging 10.5 yards per return. He's so valuable at corner that Petrino must continue to weigh the injury risk of having him exposed on punts because he prefers not to fair catch. Dawkins and Malik Williams split the kickoff return job, each returning 14 while averaging 22 yards.

Scouting the CARDINALS

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP LOUISVILLE

"It's always hard to project Louisville because they're kind of a hodgepodge collection of people and they go get four or five juco kids nobody knows about, but it all goes back to Lamar (Jackson). I think the thing that really showed up is people initially thought, 'We can't blitz Lamar because of his feet,' but at the end of the day the blitz is what wrecked his world. I think you go back and look very closely at what Todd Orlando did for Houston against them on that Thursday night, it just absolutely blew them up. ... They had issues up front, and people finally figured out how you had to play them. Recipe-wise, if you sit back and play zone and you just worry about rush lanes, that's just playing right into his hands. People will play them differently out of the gates this year, and it's going to put a lot of stress on their offensive line to protect him better. ... Tempo really hurt them on defense, so we'll see how they adjust. (New defensive coordinator Peter) Sirmon is from that Justin Wilcox tree, but he really got blasted by a couple guys in the SEC (while at Mississippi State) that I didn't think were very good on offense."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 31.9 | 22 |
| DEFENSE | 30.2 | 85 |
| MARGIN | +1.7 | 46 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|--------|------|
| OFFENSE | 46.6% | 9 |
| DEFENSE | 31.9% | 3 |
| MARGIN | +14.7% | 2 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 7.2 | 4 |
| DEFENSE | 4.7 | 8 |
| MARGIN | +2.5 | 1 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 5.0 | 19 |
| DEFENSE | 4.2 | 38 |
| MARGIN | +0.8 | 16 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| PROJECTED | -5.1 | 106 |
| ACTUAL | -7 | 107 |
| MARGIN | -1.9 | 81 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness--yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

+14.7 Louisville's success rate was 46.6 percent (ninth in FBS), and meanwhile, the Cardinals defense allowed only a 31.9 percent success rate (third). That plus-14.7 percentage point margin was second in the nation.

20.4 The Cardinals averaged 20.4 gains of 10-plus yards per game and 7.6 gains of 20-plus. Both averages were the best in the nation. Lamar Jackson averaged 15.4 yards per completion and six yards per carry.

-7 Offensive explosiveness also produced some volatility. Louisville fumbled 30 times in 13 games; only three teams fumbled more. The loose balls led to a minus-seven turnover margin, 107th in the country and 13th in the ACC.

2017 LOUISVILLE ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 15 Bolin, Clay | 6-0/199 | Fr. | Lexington, KY |
| 8 Jackson, Lamar | 6-3/200 | Jr. | Pompano Beach, FL |
| 15 McCormack, Sean | 6-5/223 | Fr. | Darien, IL |
| 4 Pass, Jawon | 6-4/220 | Fr. | Columbus, GA |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 36 Burkley, Maurice | 5-9/191 | Fr. | Naperville, IL |
| 37 Graves, Taveon | 5-5/179 | Fr. | Rineyville, KY |
| 54 Little, Tobias | 6-0/248 | Fr. | Atlanta, GA |
| 52 Lococo, Vince | 6-0/233 | Fr. | Louisville, KY |
| 34 Smith, Jeremy | 6-2/224 | Sr. | Hammond, LA |
| 12 Smith, Trey | 6-0/225 | So. | Madison, MS |
| 40 Williams, Dae | 6-1/235 | Fr. | Sapulpa, OK |
| 29 Williams, Malik | 6-3/215 | Sr. | Wilson, NC |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|----------------------|
| 88 Bagley, Javonte | 6-3/202 | Sr. | Vero Beach, FL |
| 7 Bonnafon, Reggie | 6-3/208 | Sr. | Louisville, KY |
| 5 Dawkins, Seth | 6-3/206 | So. | Columbus, OH |
| 31 Duane, Jack | 5-10/157 | Fr. | Chatham, NJ |
| 87 Fitzpatrick, Dez | 6-2/200 | Fr. | Farmington Hills, MI |
| 86 Peete, Devante | 6-6/210 | Jr. | Pompano Beach, FL |
| 1 Samuel, Traveon | 5-7/170 | Jr. | Phenix City, AL |
| 19 Savage, Ja'Quay | 6-3/218 | Sr. | Tyrone, GA |
| 9 Smith, Jaylen | 6-4/219 | Jr. | Pascagoula, MS |
| 81 Spence, Emonee | 6-3/197 | So. | Pembroke Pines, FL |
| 26 Taylor-Yamano, Chris | 6-2/183 | Fr. | Rohnert Park, CA |
| 82 Wakefield, Keion | 5-10/179 | Fr. | Louisville, KY |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|------------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 83 Crum, Micky | 6-4/235 | Jr. | Columbus, OH |
| 48 Cummins, Austin | 6-5/225 | Fr. | Stevenson, AL |
| 85 Davis, Jordan | 6-4/262 | So. | Clear Lake, TX |
| 42 Polston, Tyler | 6-3/250 | Sr. | Louisville, KY |
| 80 Standberry, Charles | 6-3/243 | Sr. | Montgomery, AL |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 75 Bell, Robbie | 6-5/300 | Fr. | Hoschton, GA |
| 66 Bentley, Cole | 6-3/317 | Fr. | Belfry, KY |
| 68 Burns, Danny | 6-6/321 | Jr. | Hamilton, OH |
| 74 Christian, Geron | 6-6/318 | Jr. | Ocala, FL |
| 77 Foy, Linwood | 6-4/312 | Jr. | Los Angeles, CA |
| 60 Haycraft, Tyler | 6-3/292 | So. | Louisville, KY |
| 78 Martin, Max | 6-3/290 | Fr. | Louisville, KY |
| 72 McNeil, Lukayus | 6-6/324 | Jr. | Indianapolis, IN |
| 70 Roundtree, Toriano | 6-7/315 | Jr. | Gainesville, FL |
| 63 Scheler, Nathan | 6-1/285 | So. | Louisville, KY |
| 65 Schultheiss, Luke | 6-1/282 | So. | Council Bluffs, IA |
| 79 Thomas, Kenny | 6-6/333 | Jr. | Prattville, AL |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|----------|-----|------------------|
| 14 Bailey, Drew | 6-3/289 | Sr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 62 Dorsey, Derek | 6-3/283 | Fr. | Louisville, KY |
| 69 Ray, Chaz | 6-3/331 | So. | Louisville, KY |
| 90 Richardson, Johnny | 6-3/330 | Sr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 94 Robinson, G.G. | 6-4/302 | So. | Lilburn, GA |
| 64 Robinson, Tyler | 5-11/347 | Fr. | Fort Thomas, KY |
| 59 Shortridge, Kyle | 6-2/278 | Sr. | Loxahatchee, FL |
| 59 Tiltman, Caleb | 6-3/279 | Fr. | Dothan, AL |
| 48 Watson, Marcus | 6-0/284 | Fr. | Burlington, KY |
| 44 Williams, Chris | 6-1/290 | Sr. | Atlanta, GA |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|------------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 53 Caban, Amonte | 6-1/254 | So. | Smiths, AL |
| 96 Famurewa, Henry | 6-2/275 | Jr. | Powder Springs, GA |
| 58 Greenard, Jonathan | 6-4/245 | So. | Hiram, GA |
| 99 Hearn, James | 6-3/244 | Sr. | Tallahassee, FL |
| 56 Jones, Kam | 5-11/212 | Fr. | Gwinnett, GA |
| 93 McCrae, Gary | 6-4/252 | Jr. | Cuthbert, GA |
| 47 Melton, Reese | 6-2/224 | Fr. | Columbus, OH |
| 98 Peterson, Tabarious | 6-3/250 | Fr. | Tucker, GA |
| 43 Smith, Damien | 6-1/240 | So. | Louisville, KY |
| 49 Smyzer, Tony | 5-10/270 | Fr. | Louisville, KY |
| 31 Staples, Malik | 6-1/222 | So. | Suwanee, GA |
| 42 Stewart, Isaac | 6-2/247 | Jr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 32 Thomas, Stacy | 6-1/240 | Sr. | Miami, FL |
| 91 Young, Trevon | 6-4/255 | Sr. | Des Moines, IA |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|---------------------|
| 10 Alexander, Jaire | 5-11/192 | Jr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 9 Avery, C.J. | 5-11/205 | Fr. | Grenada, MS |
| 13 Blue, P.J. | 6-3/208 | Fr. | Jemison, AL |
| 24 Cannon, Zykiesis | 6-0/188 | Sr. | Mauldin, SC |
| 1 Carter, Alphonso | 6-3/206 | Sr. | Fort Washington, MD |
| 39 Floyd, Aaron | 5-10/190 | So. | Florence, KY |
| 21 Iakopo, London | 6-0/212 | Jr. | Carson, CA |
| 30 Pass, Khane | 6-1/207 | So. | Columbus, GA |
| 11 Smith, Dee | 6-1/202 | Jr. | Florence, AL |
| 23 Strange, Lyn | 6-1/195 | Fr. | Leon, FL |
| 3 Sturghill, Cornelius | 5-11/187 | So. | Memphis, TN |
| 35 Thomas, Lamarques | 6-0/184 | So. | Clinton, MS |
| 20 Walker, Ronald | 6-1/198 | Sr. | Byran, MS |
| 15 Washington, Trumaine | 5-10/181 | Sr. | Miami, FL |
| 22 Williams, Chucky | 6-2/206 | Fr. | Hialeah, FL |

| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|-----------------|
| 41 Betlach, Ryan (LS) | 5-10/198 | Jr. | Lexington, KY |
| 45 Creque, Blanton (K) | 5-11/188 | So. | Shelbyville, KY |
| 47 Johnson, Austin (P) | 6-2/198 | Fr. | Louisville, KY |
| 28 King, Mason (P) | 6-3/213 | So. | Louisville, KY |
| 46 Lowery, Brendan (LS) | 6-0/200 | So. | Barrington, IL |
| 67 Naure, Thomas (LS) | 6-1/305 | So. | Louisville, KY |
| 36 O'Hara, Evan (K) | 6-0/209 | Jr. | Florence, KY |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 7-1 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|-------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 1 | Charlotte | W | 70-14 |
| Sept. 9 | at Syracuse | W | 62-28 |
| Sept. 17 | Florida State | W | 63-20 |
| Sept. 24 | at Marshall | W | 59-28 |
| Oct. 1 | at Clemson | L | 36-42 |
| Oct. 14 | Duke | W | 24-14 |
| Oct. 22 | NC State | W | 54-13 |
| Oct. 29 | at Virginia | W | 32-25 |
| Nov. 5 | at Boston College | W | 52-7 |
| Nov. 12 | Wake Forest | W | 44-12 |
| Nov. 17 | at Houston | L | 10-36 |
| Nov. 26 | Kentucky | L | 38-41 |
| Dec. 31 | vs. LSU # | L | 9-29 |

#Citrus Bowl



JAIRE ALEXANDER

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|------------------|-----|-------|-------|----|-----|
| Lamar Jackson | 409 | 230 | 3,543 | 30 | 9 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Lamar Jackson | 260 | 1,571 | 6.0 | 21 | |
| Brandon Radcliff | 138 | 903 | 6.5 | 6 | |
| Jeremy Smith | 57 | 382 | 6.7 | 8 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Cole Hikutini | 50 | 668 | 13.4 | 8 | |
| James Quick | 45 | 769 | 17.1 | 6 | |
| Jamari Staples | 36 | 615 | 17.1 | 2 | |
| Jaylen Smith | 27 | 599 | 22.2 | 6 | |
| Traveon Samuel | 18 | 230 | 12.8 | 1 | |
| Jeremy Smith | 18 | 227 | 12.6 | 1 | |

KICKING: Blanton Creque, 16-19 FGs, 39-40

XP's, 87 points

TACKLES: Keith Kelsey, 93; Stacy Thomas, 85

SACKS: James Hearn, 8.0

INTERCEPTIONS: Jaire Alexander, 5

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 42.5 ppg | 1 | 6 |
| Rushing | 242.2 ypg | 2 | 13 |
| Passing | 290.5 ypg | 4 | 23 |
| Total | 532.7 ypg | 1 | 3 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 23.8 ppg | 6 | 31 |
| Rushing | 115.2 ypg | 3 | 12 |
| Passing | 207.1 ypg | 5 | 37 |
| Total | 322.2 ypg | 3 | 14 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| -7 | -0.54 | 13 | 107 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|--------------------|----|----------|------------------------|
| Kemari Averett | TE | 6-6/253 | Atlanta, GA |
| C.J. Avery | S | 6-1/210 | Grenada, MS |
| Toryque Bateman | OL | 6-6/305 | Gadsden City, AL |
| Mekhi Becton | OL | 6-7/335 | Highland Springs, VA |
| Cole Bentley | OL | 6-3/319 | Belfry, KY |
| Caleb Chandler | OL | 6-4/302 | Jefferson, GA |
| Malik Clark | LB | 6-2/249 | Milledgeville, GA |
| Malik Cunningham | QB | 6-1/188 | Montgomery, AL |
| Dorian Etheridge | LB | 6-3/228 | Charleston, WV |
| Mitch Hall | LB | 6-1/207 | Clayton, NC |
| Anthony Johnson | CS | 6-1/179 | Coconut Creek, FL |
| Joshua Johnson | WR | 5-11/180 | Atlanta, GA |
| Kameron Jones | LB | 6-1/218 | Gwinnett, GA |
| Justin Marshall | WR | 6-3/195 | Conyers, GA |
| Rodney Owens | S | 6-0/196 | Goodlettsville, TN |
| Corey Reed Jr. | WR | 6-3/192 | Fulton, GA |
| Kaheem Roach | S | 6-1/186 | Miramar, FL |
| Ronald Rudd | OL | 6-5/318 | Rialto, CA |
| TreSean Smith | CB | 6-1/186 | Hamilton, OH |
| Lyndarious Strange | S | 6-2/193 | Leon, FL |
| Colin Wilson | RB | 6-1/221 | Green Cove Springs, FL |
| Russ Yeast | CB | 5-11/187 | Johnson, IN |

The Cards' move to the ACC, consistent appearances in bowl games and development of a Heisman Trophy winner translated into a top-35 class that features three consensus four-star prospects. The biggest get was Russ Yeast, a defensive back whom Bobby Petrino flipped from Kentucky, a school where his father, Craig, starred as Tim Couch's favorite receiver. Don't be surprised if C.J. Avery fills Josh Harvey-Clemons' spot in the secondary after the four-star safety from Grenada, Miss., enrolled early and participated in spring drills. Yeast and Avery are two of the seven defensive backs U of L signed. Colin Wilson of Green Cove Springs, Fla., is the most exciting running back prospect at Louisville since Michael Bush. He had offers from Auburn, Florida, Notre Dame and Stanford. The Cards also signed five guys to stabilize a shaky offensive line, led by Mekhi Becton, who is 6'7" and 335 pounds.

Q&A with LAMAR JACKSON



A Heisman Trophy winner with unfinished business? That's the situation Lamar Jackson finds himself in this season. Jackson had one of the most statistically dominant campaigns in college football history, but a late slump left him and his Louisville teammates wanting more. And a hungry Jackson is an especially frightening prospect for the teams on Louisville's schedule this year.

College football's most electrifying and dangerous player is also one of its most engaging and humble, as we found out in this offseason encounter with the Cardinals quarterback.

When did you first realize you had a chance to win the Heisman Trophy?

I tell everyone this: Not until I had it. There were a lot of us that did a lot of great things last year. Deshaun [Watson] with his success. Jabrill [Peppers] with his success. Baker [Mayfield] and his receiver [Dede Westbrook]. I was the youngest one out of the group, and I felt like anything could have happened. I was just happy to be in New York, and when they finally called my name then I knew I had it.

Even though you were considered the leader the entire season and everybody was predicting you were the winner?

I really didn't pay attention to that. I tried to stay away from it as much as I could. A lot of people get sidetracked by that stuff. I just tried to stay focused and win games.

What's the one thing that sticks out in your mind from the night you won the Heisman?

There are a lot of things that stick out in my mind. I met a lot of great people. My family was there. It was crazy, like I said before, I almost cried. I think [U of L teammate Brandon] Radcliff jinxed me. He was like, 'Don't cry when you get on stage, bro.' I said, 'I won't cry if I win it.' Then I almost cried. So I'd say that I'd remember that the most.

Have you gone back and watched the Heisman Show on ESPN?

Oh, no. I have the award. I'm just thankful for it. I'm even more thankful now. I'm just ready to play football because I feel like I didn't finish what I started last year.

Have you kept in touch with any of the people you met in New York?

Sure. All of us talk. Jabrill. Deshaun. Dede. Bake. We message each other on social media.

How about the past winners?

No, I haven't. I haven't really talked to them. Maybe Johnny (Manziel).

He came to your room in New York after the ceremony, right?

Yes. He was speaking positive. He told me it was just the beginning. He left after that. He just talked to me for a few minutes.

How much of a college football historian are you?

I did know the history of the guys that I met, but I don't really put myself in their shoes yet. I still have two years left to play football, and there's a lot of work that I need to do.

That's interesting that you said, "two years."

Yes, sir.

Because you're planning on staying for two more years?

I'm just ready for this year right now and hopefully whatever will happen next year.

Had you known or followed many of the other Heisman winners?

Tim Tebow. His home is Florida, too, just like mine. I knew about him growing up. I felt like Florida was a great championship team and that he led his team with authority.

Were the Gators your team?

No, the (Miami) Hurricanes.

Has it been tough for you to go out after winning the Heisman?

A lot of people recognize me. We have a lot of football fanatics. They like to come up and take pictures. That's cool. I like to meet new people. The fans show love. That's what it's all about.

Somebody told me that you never turn a kid down for an autograph?

No. I got turned down for an autograph by a professional football player when I was younger. That kind of hurt me. I overlooked it. But every time a kid comes up to me and wants to take a picture, I have to stop.

Who turned you down?

Randy Moss. It was a fundraiser for kids back at a field in Pompano Beach. He was out there with a lot of other professional guys. I had my shirt [to sign]. The NFL guys signed the shirts. He was done pretty much. He had signed enough. I guess I was the last one. It hurt a couple of our feelings. He was Randy Moss, a great player.

How surprised were you by your success last year?

I wouldn't say I was surprised because I was hungry and I wanted our team to build and bring the championship here last year. Hopefully we've got another two years to do it. While I'm here, we're going to try to make it happen.

What's your best memory from last season?

There were so many. We had a great year. We went 9-4. A lot of people don't do that. I don't really have a favorite.

Not the leap at Syracuse?

I did that in high school so that wasn't so different.

Coach Bobby Petrino runs a detailed passing game. How challenging was the adjustment from high school to college?

He saw me throw the ball before I got here. He liked my film. I just had to learn the system. That was my biggest thing. In high school, we really didn't have to go out there and have a playbook and study that. Here you have to do that. You're on a whole other level. You have to know what the defense is doing. That was my biggest thing, transitioning to college. Studying films, making reads, progressions. I wanted him to be tough on me, and he has been doing that ever since I've been here. He treats me just like everyone else. Nobody is special on the team. I'm here to get coached.

Coach Petrino has said that you think you can make yardage on every play but that you need to improve on throwing the ball away and not taking hits.

He always tells me that he doesn't want me to take sacks. He wants me to throw the ball away. He knows I can take it. I love the game. Hits come with it.

You talked about starting strong last season when Louisville rose to fifth in the College Football Playoff poll before you lost your last three games. Have you talked about what went wrong?

I really can't put my mind or finger on what happened. It won't happen this year. Fumbles were one thing. I fumbled a lot last year. I wasn't expecting that. I really didn't pay attention to it until the end of the season when I fumbled like every game. I don't like that. I was being careless with the ball.

What position would you play if you weren't a quarterback?

Quarterback. I don't really look at other positions. Quarterback is something I've been doing my whole life. That's all I know.

Nobody ever talked to you about being a running back or a receiver or defensive back?

No, sir. I won't hit and I'm not good at catching. Only catching snaps.

Did you play any other positions coming up?

Youth league, I played safety.

What's your best sport other than football?
Football is the only sport I ever played.

Not basketball?

No. My coaches wouldn't let me. The basketball coach at my high school wouldn't let me. Baseball, I wanted to play but the baseball coach wouldn't let me.

Why?

I don't know. He said, "Play football for the school."

What is your favorite stadium to play in other than Louisville's Papa John's Cardinal Stadium?

Clemson. It was loud in Clemson. It was nice. Big crowd. There was a lot of energy in that game. It's very loud.

What was the best defense you faced last year?

Houston. No. 10 [Ed Oliver] was nice. I give all credit to him. He's a nice guy. I give credit to their entire defense. They played the whole four quarters. Every game can't go your way. We're going to build from that.

As the season progressed and you were getting more and more national publicity, did you become a target for opposing defenses?

Oh yeah. They would always say something to me, but I don't pay it no mind. That's part of football. They're always going to say what they want to and try to take you out of your game. You've got stay focused.

What did they say? That you're not that good or overhyped?

All kind of stuff. They'll say anything. I don't pay attention to it. I don't try to remember what they said. I didn't say "I'm going to come back and get you." I don't talk back. Just play.

Who's the best athlete on your team?

We've got some freaks on our team. Reggie Bonnafon. Seth Dawkins. Dee Smith. There's a lot of guys on our team that can do many things. I can't just name one.

Who's the most famous person who congratulated you on the Heisman?

Michael Vick. That's my favorite player, so you know I'm always going to say Michael Vick. Also Peyton Manning. It was cool talking to him, too, because that's the GOAT.

Did they give you any advice?

A lot of things. Peyton Manning told me that if you're not having fun with it, always talk with your guys. Talk to the people around the program who can help you with stuff like that. You've got to always have a smile on your face. People are always watching.

Winning the Heisman hasn't seemed to change you.

Not at all. I'm still the same person. I just have the Heisman Trophy now, that's all.



NC STATE WOLFPACK

National Forecast: 27 /// ACC Atlantic Prediction: 4

Experience. NC State has it for the first time in Dave Doeren's five years as head coach. The Wolfpack, 7-6 a year ago, return 22 seniors, half of whom start, from a team that finished the 2016 season with a flourish. Doeren, 25-26 in four seasons in Raleigh, hopes that experience translates into a breakthrough after a season of "almosts" in 2016. NC State almost beat national champion Clemson. NC State almost beat perennial power Florida State. Including those two heartbreakers, four of the Wolfpack's six losses were by seven points or fewer. "Not to take anything away from (my) other teams, but when you have 22 seniors, and a bunch of them are starters, it's just different," Doeren says. "You can't plug that in. There's a lot invested with those guys."

There is a sense among Wolfpack fans that this could be Doeren's best team, but it also could be his last chance if things don't go right. With so many of the same parts back from last year, including standout defensive end Bradley Chubb and do-everything receiver/running back Jaylen Samuels, the Wolfpack have a chance to turn those "almosts" into program-changing wins.

QUARTERBACKS NC State is already a step ahead of where it was last year because it has its starting quarterback in place. Ryan Finley, a graduate transfer from Boise State, arrived in Raleigh last summer and won the job from Jalan McClendon. Finley was steady but not spectacular in his first season in the ACC. He completed 60.4 percent of his passes for 3,059 yards. The 6'4" junior threw 18 touchdowns and was intercepted eight times. Finley needs to take more chances downfield. He settled for the easy throw too often, and elite defenses were able to crowd the box and make NC State's offense one-dimensional. McClendon, who has good size at 6'5" and 221 pounds, took the demotion to backup in stride and emerged as a viable running threat. He got more reps at the end of the season and gives offensive coordinator Eli Drinkwitz some flexibility.

RUNNING BACKS Nyheim Hines came to NC State as a running back but spent his first two seasons at receiver. The 5'9", 197-pound speedster will move back to his natural position this season to help offset the loss of 1,000-yard rusher Matt Dayes. Hines, playing mostly as a slot receiver, was second on the team with 43 catches for 525 yards. He also ran the ball 13 times for 44 yards. Dayes accounted for 49.4 percent of NC State's rushing attempts last season. Hines won't have to be quite the workhorse, but his pop and extra step will be needed to break some big plays. Junior Reggie Gallaspy, who ran for 234 yards in 10 games while dealing with a nagging knee injury, will be the main short-yardage and red-zone threat. Gallaspy and McClendon had good chemistry, in particular, at the end of last season and offered a nice change-of-pace look. Senior Dakwa Nichols, the best pass blocker of the group, and true freshman Erin Collins might get a chance to help.

RECEIVERS Long a problem area, with too many drops and not enough size, the receiving corps should be a strength this season. Junior Stephen Louis led the team with 678 receiving yards last season, and sophomore Kelvin Harmon caught five touchdown passes. Neither was a known commodity going into last season, but both developed into reliable downfield targets and playmakers on the outside. Samuels, who has been listed as a fullback and tight end but is for all intents and purposes a slot receiver, is the primary target on the inside. He led the team in receptions (55) and touchdown catches (seven) for the second straight season. Samuels will be NC State's main option on offense, either in the passing game or as a runner on jet sweeps. He had six rushing touchdowns on only 33 rushing attempts last season.

He has 31 career touchdowns in 39 games (he also threw for a touchdown in the Wolfpack's 28-21 win over North Carolina last season). Sophomore receiver (and converted quarterback) Jakobi Meyers and senior receiver JuMichael Ramos also have proven to be good options for Finley.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN This is another spot at which NC State is well ahead of where it was last year. Four starters return, including senior right guard Tony Adams — a three-year starter and second-team All-ACC selection in 2016. It's also the second year under offensive line coach Dwayne Ledford, so there is greater familiarity with the blocking schemes. A revamped line made significant strides in protecting the quarterback last year. The Wolfpack allowed 17 sacks in 2016, 22 fewer than the year before. The running game numbers went

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|----------------------|
| Sept. 2 | vs. South Carolina # |
| Sept. 9 | Marshall |
| Sept. 16 | Furman |
| Sept. 23 | at Florida State |
| Sept. 30 | Syracuse |
| Oct. 5 | Louisville |
| Oct. 14 | at Pittsburgh |
| Oct. 28 | at Notre Dame |
| Nov. 4 | Clemson |
| Nov. 11 | at Boston College |
| Nov. 18 | at Wake Forest |
| Nov. 25 | North Carolina |

#Charlotte, NC

KEY WOLFPACK

BRADLEY CHUBB, DE Led the Wolfpack with 10.5 sacks and 21.5 tackles for a loss in 2016. He turned down NFL money to return for his senior season.

JAYLEN SAMUELS, WR NC State's top receiver (55 catches) and scorer (13 total TDs) should be in for an even bigger role as a senior.

RYAN FINLEY, QB Graduate transfer won the starting job in the summer and threw for 3,059 yards, completing 60.4 percent of his passes. He still has two years of eligibility remaining.

KEY LOSSES

MATT DAYES, RB Rushed for 100-plus yards in five of eight ACC games en route to a 1,166-yard season.

JOSH JONES, S Turned in a stellar junior campaign with a team-best 109 tackles and three interceptions.

JOE SCSELF, C Grad transfer from South Alabama stabilized a young offensive line with his leadership and toughness.

RISING STAR

With so many players back from last year, there's not a lot of room for newcomers this season. Receiver **C.J. Riley** was expected to help last season as a true freshman before he was sidelined with a knee injury in camp. Riley, a big target at 6'4", has big-play potential.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 7-5, 4-4 ACC

The Wolfpack finished 2016 on a high note thanks to wins in three out of their final four games. While the late-season surge helped erase doubts regarding Dave Doeren's job status, NC State has not finished better than 3-5 in league play under his watch. But with 16 returning starters, this could be Doeren's best team in Raleigh. Losing running back Matt Dayes is a big loss for an offense that ranked ninth in the ACC in scoring last year. The strength of this unit is the line, with quarterback Ryan Finley and all-purpose threat Jaylen Samuels also providing a solid foundation for improvement. The defense quietly ranked fourth in the ACC in scoring last year and once again features a standout front seven. With a few breaks, State could emerge as the surprise team in the league. **Postseason: Sun Bowl vs. UCLA**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

FLAGGED The top priority this offseason was cleaning up the penalties. The Wolfpack ranked 104th nationally last season with 62.3 penalty yards per game. NC State was flagged for 13 penalties in two ACC games (Wake Forest and Clemson) and at least eight in four games. Procedural issues hurt the Wolfpack offense, especially in a 21-14 home loss to Boston College.

HOME-FIELD STRUGGLES NC State has to figure out a way to be better at home in ACC play. The Wolfpack are just 3-13 in league play at home in Dave Doeren's tenure. Avoidable home losses to Boston College and Miami were the difference between an okay season and a good one last year.

HAPPY DAYES Until Matt Dayes' 1,166-yard season last year, 2002 had been the Wolfpack's last season with a 1,000-yard rusher, the longest drought for any Power 5 conference program. Given all the injuries at running back in the spring, notably to junior Reggie Gallaspy, it's tough to predict just how the Wolfpack running back rotation will shake out, but there's no doubt Dayes will be missed. "Matt Dayes is Matt Dayes," senior guard Tony Adams says. "He's a special player. We'll definitely miss him, but we'll be able to fill the void the best way that we can. We have a lot of guys who can step up." The next drought for the Wolfpack to break? It hasn't had a 1,000-yard receiver since Jericho Cotchery (1,369 yards) in 2003.

STAFF UPDATE Kevin Patrick (defensive line) and Aaron Henry (safeties) are the two new staff additions. Patrick, who worked at Texas Tech last season, replaces Ryan Nielsen, who left for an NFL assistant job (New Orleans). Henry, who worked at Rutgers last season, replaces Clayton White, who left to become Western Kentucky's defensive coordinator.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Dave Doeren

RECORD AT SCHOOL

25-26 (4 years)

CAREER RECORD

48-30 (6 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Elijah Drinkwitz

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Dave Huxtable

LOCATION

Raleigh, NC

STADIUM

Carter-Finley Stadium (57,583)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



WR **JAYLEN SAMUELS**



down, though, even with Dayes (1,166 yards) having a standout season. NC State's rushing production dropped from 202.1 yards per game to 156.2 and from 4.9 per carry down to 4.0. Ledford's goal this season is to protect Finley and have the Pack's backs run for a better average.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Doeren's best work has clearly been upgrading the talent on the defensive front. With four returning senior starters, the Wolfpack have one of the top groups in the ACC and the country. Chubb racked up 21.5 tackles for a loss, including 10.5 sacks. He was able to dominate one-on-one blocks on the outside because of the strength of the interior of the line. Seniors Justin Jones and B.J. Hill are strong up the middle, and NC State's defense was stingy against the run. The Wolfpack finished No. 8 in the country in rush defense (108.6 ypg) and in the top 30 in total and scoring defense. With seven regulars returning in the rotation, there isn't a ton of room for newcomers, but freshman defensive tackle Grant Gibson, a four-star recruit from Charlotte, has a chance to help right away.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

| | | | |
|-------|------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| WR 12 | Stephen Louis (Jr.) | 85 | JuMichael Ramos (Sr.) |
| WR 3 | Kelvin Harmon (So.) | 19 | C.J. Riley (Fr.) |
| WR 1 | Jaylen Samuels (Sr.) | 11 | Jakobi Meyers (So.) |
| LT 53 | Tyler Jones (Jr.) | 74 | Emanuel McGirt (So.) |
| LG 70 | Terronne Prescod (Jr.) | 76 | Harrison Gee (Fr.) |
| C 65 | Garrett Bradbury (Jr.) | 71 | Joe Sculthorpe (Fr.) |
| RG 50 | Tony Adams (Sr.) | 64 | Peter Daniel (Sr.) |
| RT 54 | Will Richardson (Jr.) | 67 | Justin Witt (Fr.) |
| TE 48 | Cole Cook (Sr.) | 89 | Thomas Ruocchio (So.) |
| QB 15 | Ryan Finley (Jr.) | 2 | Jalan McClendon (Jr.) |
| RB 7 | Nyheim Hines (Jr.) | 4 | Reggie Gallaspy (Jr.) |

DEFENSE (8)

| | | | |
|-------|------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| DE 9 | Bradley Chubb (Sr.) | 39 | James Smith-Williams (So.) |
| DT 27 | Justin Jones (Sr.) | 91 | Eurndraus Bryant (Jr.) |
| DT 98 | B.J. Hill (Sr.) | 90 | Shug Frazier (Fr.) |
| DE 35 | Kentavius Street (Sr.) | 45 | Darian Roseboro (Jr.) |
| LB 4 | Jerod Fernandez (Sr.) | 32 | Riley Nicholson (Jr.) |
| LB 58 | Airius Moore (Sr.) | 3 | Germaine Pratt (Jr.) |
| CB 2 | Mike Stevens (Sr.) | 15 | Johnathan Alston (Sr.) |
| CB 21 | Nick McCloud (So.) | 12 | Nicholas Lacy (Sr.) |
| NB 10 | Freddie Phillips (Jr.) | 20 | Trae Meadows (So.) |
| FS 14 | Dexter Wright (Jr.) | 34 | Tim Kidd-Glass (So.) |
| SS 24 | Shawn Boone (Sr.) | 31 | Jarius Morehead (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|-------------------|------|--------------------|
| K 35 | Carson Wise (Jr.) | KR 7 | Nyheim Hines (Jr.) |
| P 90 | A.J. Cole (Jr.) | PR 7 | Nyheim Hines (Jr.) |

out 2016 season, left early for the NFL. Corner Jack Tocho and nickel Dravious Wright were mainstays on defense for four years. There is some experience to work with; senior Mike Stevens returns at one cornerback spot, and senior strong safety Shawn Boone will be counted on to be a leader. Inexperienced corner Nick McCloud and nickel Freddie Phillips will have to grow up quickly. This is the biggest area of concern for Doeren.

SPECIALISTS NC State has struggled the past two years in the kicking game. Doeren is hopeful that Carson Wise, a graduate transfer from Carson-Newman, can help solve that problem. The Wolfpack were just 9-of-17 on field goal attempts last season and had a combined five missed field goals in close losses to East Carolina and Clemson. In the latter, kicker Kyle Bambard missed a 33-yarder that would have won the game in regulation. Wise, who began his career at Virginia Tech, wasn't exactly automatic at Carson-Newman last year (8-of-13 on field goals). Fortunately for Doeren, he does have a standout punter, junior A.J. Cole, and an outstanding kick returner in Hines. With just a little progress at kicker, NC State could turn a big corner.

Scouting the WOLFPACK

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP NC STATE

"Dave Doeren is a solid ball coach, but they're so nondescript. ... Jaylen Samuels was an honorable mention all-conference guy, and he's played a lot of minutes. He's dynamic with the ball in his hands. They'll move him around a lot to get him touches. He's a really good player. ... At the end of the day it'll come down to the quarterback and how much better he plays in conference. Ryan Finley was good in the non-conference, but they had a four-game slide and he struggled with man-to-man defense against better competition. He played solid but just didn't do enough to help them win games, so if he can make that jump there's a chance they'll be good. If not, their staff will probably be looking for jobs. It's a big year for them. ... Defensively, there might not be a better front four out there in the league aside from Clemson. They've got six guys who could start just about anywhere in the ACC, and they're going to be good at stopping the run. Bradley Chubb coming back is huge for them. We thought he was going to turn pro. Big-time pass rusher. They've got NFL-caliber players on defense."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 29.7 | 63 |
| DEFENSE | 30.9 | 99 |
| MARGIN | -1.2 | 90 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| OFFENSE | 41.6% | 54 |
| DEFENSE | 35.3% | 21 |
| MARGIN | +6.3% | 24 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 5.8 | 66 |
| DEFENSE | 5.1 | 29 |
| MARGIN | +0.7 | 38 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.0 | 107 |
| DEFENSE | 4.2 | 40 |
| MARGIN | -0.2 | 86 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| PROJECTED | 2.8 | 47 |
| ACTUAL | 2 | 47 |
| MARGIN | -0.8 | 70 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness--yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

5.49 NC State averaged just 5.49 yards per first down on offense (98th in FBS) but allowed just 4.42 yards on such downs (second). First down defense helped State stay close to strong teams like Clemson and Florida State.

3.6 State allowed just 3.6 rushes per game of 10-plus yards, ninth in FBS, and their stuff rate (run stops at or behind the line) of 22.5 percent ranked 26th. State leveraged opponents into passing downs quite well.

-1.2 State's field-position margin of minus-1.2 yards per possession ranked 90th in FBS and dead last in the ACC, and it most certainly didn't help in close games. The Pack were 90th in punting average and 121st in average punt return allowed.

2017 NC STATE ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 14 Cornwell, Woody | 6-2/210 | Jr. | Lake Junaluska, NC |
| 15 Finley, Ryan | 6-4/205 | Jr. | Phoenix, AZ |
| 2 McClendon, Jalan | 6-5/221 | Jr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 13 McKay, Matt | 6-3/193 | Fr. | Raleigh, NC |
| 6 Parham, Dylan | 6-4/224 | Fr. | Raleigh, NC |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|----------|-----|------------------|
| 33 Bodine, Brady | 5-10/200 | Jr. | Camp Lejeune, NC |
| 10 Boyd, Heath | 5-10/190 | Fr. | Wake Forest, NC |
| 29 Braxton, Marquise | 6-1/226 | So. | Greenville, NC |
| 26 Davis, Jacob | 6-0/224 | Sr. | Farmville, NC |
| 46 DeBoer, Logan | 6-1/226 | Fr. | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 4 Gallaspy II, Reggie | 5-11/225 | Jr. | High Point, NC |
| 7 Hines, Nyheim | 5-9/197 | Jr. | Garner, NC |
| 27 Nichols, Dakota | 5-9/195 | Sr. | Rockingham, NC |
| 28 Rhem, Damontay | 5-11/216 | So. | Wendell, NC |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|----------|-----|---------------------|
| 31 Dabbs, Tyler | 5-9/190 | Fr. | Eden, NC |
| 41 Eason, Will | 5-7/173 | Fr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 38 Faison, Miles | 6-0/170 | Fr. | Greensboro, NC |
| 84 Grier, Vernon | 5-10/180 | So. | Charlotte, NC |
| 3 Harmon, Kelvin | 6-3/213 | So. | Palmyra, NJ |
| 34 Hord, Tucker | 6-8/160 | Fr. | Greensboro, NC |
| 30 Locklear, Gavin | 5-10/190 | Sr. | Apex, NC |
| 12 Louis, Stephen | 6-2/217 | Jr. | West Palm Beach, FL |
| 11 Meyers, Jakobi | 6-2/188 | So. | Lithonia, GA |
| 87 Morrison, Stephen | 5-11/201 | Jr. | Weddington, NC |
| 85 Ramos, JuMichael | 6-2/200 | Sr. | Lovejoy, GA |
| 19 Riley, C.J. | 6-4/204 | Fr. | Coconut Creek, FL |
| 1 Samuels, Jaylen | 5-11/223 | Sr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 83 Stephens, Daeshawn | 6-1/212 | Fr. | Durham, NC |
| 80 Thompson, Antoine | 6-1/180 | Fr. | Plant City, FL |
| 8 Trowell, Maurice | 5-11/191 | Jr. | Durham, NC |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 42 Autenrieth, Dylan | 6-4/234 | Fr. | Dallas, GA |
| 48 Cook, Cole | 6-6/250 | Sr. | Carrollton, GA |
| 47 Darden, Damien | 6-3/250 | Fr. | Pikeville, NC |
| 89 Ruocchio, Thomas | 6-3/245 | So. | Raleigh, NC |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 50 Adams, Tony | 6-2/222 | Sr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 65 Bradbury, Garrett | 6-3/293 | Jr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 52 Brown, Kendall | 6-5/289 | Fr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 56 Byers, Kollin | 6-2/276 | Fr. | Shelby, NC |
| 73 Chase, Justin | 6-5/290 | Fr. | Chesapeake, VA |
| 64 Daniel, Peter | 6-4/294 | Fr. | Raleigh, NC |
| 75 Folsom, Bryce | 6-4/287 | Sr. | Alpharetta, GA |
| 76 Gee, Harrison | 6-3/290 | Fr. | Burlington, NC |
| 53 Jones, Tyler | 6-3/300 | Jr. | Stone Mountain, GA |
| 79 Kaiser, Ben | 6-3/282 | Sr. | Pasadena, CA |
| 74 McGirt, Jr., Emanuel | 6-4/300 | So. | Durham, NC |
| 70 Prescod, Terronne | 6-5/338 | Jr. | Decatur, GA |
| 54 Richardson, Will | 6-4/322 | Jr. | Burlington, NC |
| 59 Ryan, Liam | 6-2/298 | Fr. | Cary, NC |
| 71 Sculthorpe, Joe | 6-3/300 | Fr. | Hampstead, NC |
| 72 Walton, Jr., Philip | 6-7/300 | So. | Charlotte, NC |
| 78 Witt, Aaron | 6-5/307 | So. | Baton Rouge, LA |
| 67 Witt, Justin | 6-6/293 | Fr. | Chicago, IL |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------------|---------|-----|----------------------|
| 54 Alford, Davion | 6-0/228 | Sr. | Raleigh, NC |
| 69 Bellamy, Evin | 6-2/220 | So. | Leland, NC |
| 73 Bowman, Grant | 6-1/278 | Jr. | Wilmington, NC |
| 68 Bowman, Troy | 6-3/271 | Fr. | Wilmington, NC |
| 91 Bryant, Eurndraus | 6-1/325 | Jr. | North Charleston, SC |
| 9 Chubb, Bradley | 6-4/275 | Sr. | Marietta, GA |
| 90 Frazier, Ben | 6-3/316 | Fr. | Buford, GA |
| 98 Hill, B.J. | 6-4/315 | Sr. | Oakboro, NC |
| 55 Holden, Deonte | 6-4/240 | Jr. | Landover, MD |
| 99 Johnson, Quentez | 6-2/294 | So. | Ellenwood, GA |
| 27 Jones, Justin | 6-2/312 | Sr. | Austell, GA |
| 97 Lyas, Xavier | 6-4/215 | Fr. | Plant City, FL |
| 60 Pacanovsky, Grant | 6-2/265 | Fr. | Cary, NC |
| 95 Riley, Tyrone | 6-6/285 | So. | Savannah, GA |
| 45 Roseboro, Darian | 6-4/287 | Jr. | Lincolnton, NC |
| 39 Smith-Williams, James | 6-4/247 | So. | Raleigh, NC |
| 35 Street, Kentavius | 6-2/282 | Sr. | Greenville, NC |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 4 Fernandez, Jerod | 6-0/224 | Sr. | Sanford, FL |
| 36 Miller, Brock | 6-3/228 | Fr. | Port St. Lucie, FL |
| 58 Moore, Airius | 6-0/237 | Sr. | Beavercreek, OH |
| 32 Nicholson, Riley | 6-0/237 | Jr. | Kissimmee, FL |
| 43 Pierson, David | 6-0/223 | Fr. | Wendell, NC |
| 3 Pratt, Germaine | 6-3/232 | Jr. | High Point, NC |
| 48 Smith, Bryan | 6-2/259 | Sr. | Oxford, NC |
| 49 Stevens, Matt | 6-0/223 | Fr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 44 Strickland, Fredrick | 6-2/202 | So. | Harrells, NC |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 15 Alston, Johnathan | 6-0/210 | Sr. | Bunn, NC |
| 19 Banks, Bryce | 6-2/192 | Fr. | Columbia, MO |
| 24 Boone, Shawn | 5-10/206 | Sr. | W. Palm Beach, FL |
| 36 Brown, III, William | 5-10/185 | So. | Raleigh, NC |
| 38 Dabbs, Will | 5-10/192 | Fr. | Eden, NC |
| 34 Kidd-Glass, Tim | 6-1/202 | So. | Danville, VA |
| 12 Lacy, Nicholas | 5-7/182 | Sr. | Pinehurst, NC |
| 21 McCloud, Nick | 6-0/185 | So. | Rock Hill, SC |
| 20 Meadows, Trae | 6-2/190 | So. | Greensboro, NC |
| 31 Morehead, Jarius | 6-1/217 | So. | Whitsett, NC |
| 25 Paul, Sean | 5-11/192 | Sr. | Vero Beach, FL |
| 10 Phillips, Jr., Freddie | 6-1/200 | Jr. | Pelion, SC |
| 46 Price, Braxton | 5-7/157 | Fr. | High Point, NC |
| 22 Stallings, Isaiah | 6-4/219 | Fr. | Fayetteville, NC |
| 2 Stevens, Mike | 5-11/190 | Sr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 30 Valdez, James | 5-11/193 | Fr. | Orangeburg, SC |
| 14 Wright, Dexter | 6-2/232 | Jr. | Wilson, NC |

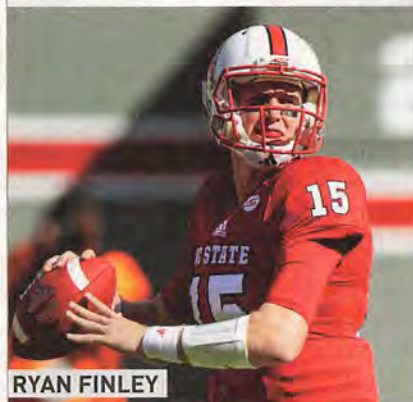
| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------------|----------|-----|------------------|
| 91 Alexander, Asa (P) | 5-10/214 | Fr. | Greenville, NC |
| 92 Bambar, Kyle (K) | 5-8/190 | Jr. | Wixom, MI |
| 90 Cole III, A.J. (P) | 6-4/230 | Jr. | College Park, GA |
| 57 Griffiths, Tyler (LS) | 6-2/230 | Jr. | Indian Trail, NC |
| 97 Maples, Jackson (K) | 5-10/195 | Jr. | West End, NC |
| 93 McCarthy, Tanner (K) | 5-8/182 | So. | Wilson, NC |
| 55 Quiggle, Jackson (LS) | 5-10/192 | Fr. | Sanford, NC |
| 35 Wise, Carson (K) | 5-10/170 | Jr. | Blacksburg, VA |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 3-5 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|-------------------|--------|-------|
| Sept. 1 | William & Mary | W | 48-14 |
| Sept. 10 | at East Carolina | L | 30-33 |
| Sept. 17 | Old Dominion | W | 49-22 |
| Oct. 1 | Wake Forest | W | 33-16 |
| Oct. 8 | Notre Dame | W | 10-3 |
| Oct. 15 | at Clemson | [ot] L | 17-24 |
| Oct. 22 | at Louisville | L | 13-54 |
| Oct. 29 | Boston College | L | 14-21 |
| Nov. 5 | Florida State | L | 20-24 |
| Nov. 12 | at Syracuse | W | 35-20 |
| Nov. 19 | Miami | L | 13-27 |
| Nov. 25 | at North Carolina | W | 28-21 |
| Dec. 26 | vs. Vanderbilt # | W | 41-17 |

#Independence Bowl



RYAN FINLEY

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|-----------------|-----|-------|-------|----|-----|
| Ryan Finley | 402 | 243 | 3,059 | 18 | 8 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Matthew Dayes | 249 | 1,166 | 4.7 | 10 | |
| Reggie Gallaspy | 49 | 234 | 4.8 | 2 | |
| Jaylen Samuels | 33 | 189 | 5.7 | 6 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Jaylen Samuels | 55 | 565 | 10.3 | 7 | |
| Nyheim Hines | 43 | 525 | 12.2 | 0 | |
| Stephen Louis | 35 | 678 | 19.4 | 2 | |
| Matthew Dayes | 32 | 271 | 8.5 | 0 | |
| Bra'Lon Cherry | 30 | 434 | 14.5 | 3 | |

KICKING: Kyle Bambar, 5-10 FGs, 25-28 XPs, 40 points

TACKLES: Josh Jones, 109; Jerod Fernandez, 88

SACKS: Bradley Chubb, 10.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Josh Jones, 3

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 27.0 ppg | 9 | 75 |
| Rushing | 156.2 ypg | 7 | 86 |
| Passing | 260.2 ypg | 8 | 38 |
| Total | 416.4 ypg | 9 | 63 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 22.8 ppg | 4 | 27 |
| Rushing | 108.6 ypg | 2 | 8 |
| Passing | 244.2 ypg | 11 | 82 |
| Total | 352.8 ypg | 7 | 24 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| +2 | +0.15 | 6 | 49 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|---------|--------------------|--------------------|----|----------|-------------------|
| Louis Aceus | LB | 6-0/200 | Spring Valley, NY | Chris Ingram | CB | 6-0/180 | Mooresville, NC |
| Danny Blakeman | LB | 6-2/227 | Raleigh, NC | Dante Johnson | DE | 6-3/248 | Apopka, FL |
| Adam Boselli | TE | 6-5/220 | Ponte Vedra, FL | Ibrahim Kante | DE | 6-5/235 | New York, NY |
| Kevince Brown | DE | 6-6/242 | Winter Park, FL | Xavier Lyas | DE | 6-5/218 | Plant City, FL |
| Erin Collins | RB | 6-1/200 | Plant City, FL | Jessie Malit | LB | 6-3/215 | Concord, NC |
| Dalton Counts | S | 6-0/211 | Raleigh, NC | Matt McKay | QB | 6-4/186 | Raleigh, NC |
| Cayman Czesak | LB | 6-2/200 | Wilmington, NC | Isaiah Moore | LB | 6-3/220 | Chester, VA |
| Damien Darden | TE | 6-4/246 | Pikeville, NC | Larrell Murchison | DL | 6-4/290 | Elizabethtown, NC |
| Emeka Emezie | WR | 6-3/195 | Waxhaw, NC | Damontay Rhem | RB | 5-11/215 | Wendell, NC |
| Joshua Fedd-Jackson | T | 6-3/336 | Montvale, NJ | Nakia Robinson Jr. | RB | 5-11/185 | Miami, FL |
| Max Fisher | WR | 6-3/205 | Upper Marlboro, MD | Liam Ryan | OL | 6-3/290 | Cary, NC |
| Charles Fletcher | OL | 6-2/273 | Greenville, NC | Raven Saunders | LB | 6-1/215 | Riviera Beach, FL |
| Grant Gibson | DT | 6-1/295 | Charlotte, NC | Bryson Speas | OL | 6-4/265 | Greensboro, NC |
| Trenton Gill | K/P | 6-4/187 | Hillsborough, NC | Antoine Thompson | WR | 6-1/176 | Plant City, FL |

Defensive tackle Grant Gibson, from the same high school as Jaylen Samuels, has a chance to help right away. Running back Erin Collins, who has some size, will be in position to contribute as a true freshman at a position of need. Cornerback Chris Ingram and receiver Antoine Thompson, who is coming off a knee injury but enrolled in January, are two others to watch. Dave Doeren likes the potential of QB Matt McKay.

S SYRACUSE ORANGE

National Forecast: 63 /// ACC Atlantic Prediction: 6

Head coach Dino Babers will look to replicate the second-season growth he experienced with Eastern Illinois (five more wins) and Bowling Green (two) at Syracuse in 2017. But after achieving a 4-8 mark in Year 1, he and the Orange face one of the toughest schedules in the nation this season. In addition to squaring off with annual Atlantic Division foes Florida State, Clemson and Louisville, SU will travel to Miami for its Coastal Division crossover game and play at LSU in its non-conference finale.

Babers' hurry-up spread offense promises to provide exciting moments in the Carrier Dome, and personnel-wise, the team returns most of its top playmakers. On defense, though, SU will need to shore up the secondary and manufacture pressure from a young front four. The Orange added three defensive backs with college experience this offseason who could start Week 1.

QUARTERBACKS Eric Dungey returns for his junior year as one of the top signal callers in the ACC. He has the arm strength and accuracy to make every throw in Babers' system, as well as the agility to win one-on-one situations against edge defenders. Once again, his ability to stay healthy projects to be a key variable in the Orange's campaign. Over the past two seasons, SU is 7-10 in games in which Dungey has played at least a half and 1-6 in its other games. Dungey's missed all of that time due to apparent head injuries. In hopes of being able to withstand more powerful hits this season, the Oregon native has added about 15 pounds. Senior Zack Mahoney, a former walk-on, will enter camp as the primary backup after posting seven total touchdowns in SU's 76-61 loss at Pittsburgh to end last season. However, incoming Elite 11 finalist and Under Armour All-American Tommy DeVito was told he would be given a chance to compete.

RUNNING BACKS Babers didn't have the bruising, between-the-tackles back he likes for his offense on the roster last season, but that could change this year with the arrival of Markenzky Pierre. Pierre rushed for more than 2,500 yards and 31 touchdowns at Liberty High School in Florida last season and is expected to contribute immediately. He'll likely work his way in behind junior Dontae Strickland to start, but he could wind up earning the lion's share of the carries if he performs as well as Babers and Co. hope. Strickland was the team's lead back last season, but he failed to break tackles or reel off big plays. SU also returns sophomore Moe Neal, who averaged a team-high 5.2 yards per carry last season, but he practiced in the slot during spring ball. Signee Allen Stritzinger chose SU over an offer to play defensive back for Michigan, while another incoming freshman, Chris Elmore (6'2", 280), could see early time at fullback.

RECEIVERS After resetting SU's record books in his lone season as a graduate transfer, Amba Etta-Tawo is off to the NFL. In his place, senior Steve Ishmael is expected to be the top man on the outside. But senior inside receiver Erv Philips could be the team's most dynamic pass-catching threat. His stop-start speed is remarkable. Junior Jamal Custis and sophomore Devin Butler are breakout candidates who have the size and speed to stretch the field opposite Ishmael, while Neal and sophomore Sean Riley are the leading contenders to see time in four-wide sets. Junior college tight end Ravian Pierce could add a layer to Babers' offense that the Orange didn't have in 2016 as neither contributing tight end served a significant role as a pass catcher. Four freshman receivers and tight end Aaron Hackett arrive this summer with hopes of breaking into the rotation.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN While Dungey's health is the critical factor for SU's offense, position-wise, this unit is the biggest question mark. After early season injuries to Omari Palmer and Jason Emerich, SU was forced to send out five first-year starters for the majority of last season. Back for this year, that group features a couple of potential finished products in left tackle Cody Conway and left guard Aaron Roberts as well as a pair of developing redshirt sophomores in center Colin Byrne and right guard Evan Adams. Adams, who was limited for about half of spring practice due to an undisclosed injury, will likely have to fend off redshirt freshman Airon Servais for his starting job, while another second-year player, center Sam Heckel, could also push for time. Senior right tackle Jamar McGloster has shed more than 25 pounds in hopes of keeping up with faster edge rushers. Early enrollee Patrick Davis, a 21-year-old from Canada, is a wild card who has played all three positions on the O-line.

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|-------------------------|
| Sept. 1 | Central Connecticut St. |
| Sept. 9 | Middle Tennessee |
| Sept. 16 | Central Michigan |
| Sept. 23 | at LSU |
| Sept. 30 | at NC State |
| Oct. 7 | Pittsburgh |
| Oct. 13 | Clemson |
| Oct. 21 | at Miami |
| Nov. 4 | at Florida State |
| Nov. 11 | Wake Forest |
| Nov. 18 | at Louisville |
| Nov. 25 | Boston College |

KEY ORANGE

ERIC DUNGEY, QB His health could mean the difference between SU's first bowl berth since 2013 and another sub-.500 campaign.

ZAIRE FRANKLIN, LB The heart and soul of the defense, Franklin could become Syracuse's first three-time captain since the 1890s.

ANTWAN CORDY, S Fully recovered from a broken forearm, Cordy is the team's most athletic defensive back.

KEY LOSSES

AMBA ETTA-TAWO, WR Etta-Tawo came to SU as a graduate transfer and exploded as the primary offensive weapon last season.

BRISLY ESTIME, WR A senior slot man and special teams playmaker, Estime averaged 17.7 yards per punt return to lead the nation in 2016.

COREY WINFIELD, CB Winfield was the best of the worst in SU's secondary last season and will use his final year of eligibility at West Virginia this season.

RISING STAR

After an All-America season at Southwest Mississippi Community College last season, tight end **Ravian Pierce** heads to Syracuse as a receiving threat who can operate on the end of the line, in the slot or split out wide. The big question: How well can he block?

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 5-7, 2-6 ACC

The record from 2015 to 2016 didn't change, but optimism is high in Syracuse after Dino Babers' debut. With 19 returning starters, and a full year to transition to new schemes on both sides of the ball, the Orange could be the ACC's most improved team in 2017. Babers has plenty of skill talent to utilize, and quarterback Eric Dungey should contend for all-conference honors. However, this offense won't take off unless the line improves after giving up 38 sacks last year. It's a good thing Syracuse has plenty of firepower. The defense returns 10 starters but gave up 42.1 points per game in ACC play last year. A non-conference matchup against LSU and a crossover game against Miami will make it tough for Syracuse to get to six wins — but progress is being made.



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

SUSPENDED Defensive end Jaquwan Nelson and safety Devon Clarke were arrested and charged with second-degree burglary this winter. The now-suspended players were the subjects of a Syracuse Police investigation that claims they stole two pairs of "Yeezy" boots, a PlayStation 4 and a laptop from an apartment on SU's South Campus. Both were expected to compete for reserve roles this season. Nelson was a highly touted recruit who received late interest from Georgia during his recruitment.

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED? Dino Babers didn't hesitate to make immediate upgrades to his secondary. A group that struggled mightily with blown coverages will receive a significant facelift this season with the arrival of graduate transfer cornerbacks Devin M. Butler (Notre Dame) and Jordan Martin (Toledo), as well as junior college safety Mykelti Williams. Five total junior college prospects signed with the Orange this offseason: Williams, tight end Ravian Pierce, linebacker Ryan Guthrie, defensive end Brandon Berry and defensive tackle Shaquille Grosvenor.

STAFF CHANGES The Orange lost two assistants this offseason: linebackers coach/special teams coordinator Tom Kaufman to a defensive coordinator job at Chattanooga and running backs coach Mike Hart to the same position at Indiana (Babers said Hart received an "enormous" raise). To fill one void, Babers hired 26-year veteran Steve Stanard as defensive ends coach, shifting Vinson Reynolds to defensive tackles and giving linebacker responsibilities to defensive coordinator Brian Ward. For the other, he brought in Justin Lustig as running backs coach/special teams coordinator. Lustig led Edinboro (Pa.) University to the biggest turnaround in Division II history as head coach last season, earning D2Football.com Coach of the Year honors.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Dino Babers

RECORD AT SCHOOL

4-8 (1 year)

CAREER RECORD

41-24 (5 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS

Sean Lewis, Mike Lynch

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Brian Ward

LOCATION

Syracuse, NY

STADIUM

Carrier Dome (49,262)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



QB **ERIC DUNGEY**

S

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Junior defensive tackle Chris Slayton is back as the lone proven entity in this unit. With junior Steven Clark's football future in doubt due to a blood clotting issue discovered this offseason, sophomore McKinley Williams is emerging as a potential starter — he's gained more than 40 pounds since arriving last summer. Sophomore ends Kendall Coleman and Josh Black started a combined 20 games in 2016 and will need to become more dynamic in creating penetration and more consistent in gap contain. Junior college defensive end Brandon Berry could also work his way into the mix, while redshirt freshman Jaquwan Nelson made a thin group thinner by getting suspended this winter after he was charged with second-degree burglary. Junior college defensive tackle signee Shaquille Grosvenor will provide another experienced, if raw, lineman when he gets on campus this summer.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

| | | | |
|----|----|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| WR | 8 | Steve Ishmael (Sr.) | R.Thompson-Bishop (Fr.) |
| WR | 17 | Jamal Custis (Jr.) | 5 Devin Butler (So.) |
| WR | 3 | Ervin Philips (Sr.) | Nykeim Johnson (Fr.) |
| WR | 21 | Moe Neal (So.) | 10 Sean Riley (So.) |
| LT | 60 | Cody Conway (Jr.) | 77 Mike Clark (Fr.) |
| LG | 59 | Aaron Roberts (Jr.) | 69 Patrick Davis (Fr.) |
| C | 64 | Colin Byrne (So.) | 75 Sam Heckel (Fr.) |
| RG | 63 | Evan Adams (So.) | 68 Airon Servais (Fr.) |
| RT | 65 | Jamar McGloster (Sr.) | 77 Mike Clark (Fr.) |
| QB | 2 | Eric Dungey (Jr.) | 16 Zack Mahoney (Sr.) |
| RB | 4 | Dontae Strickland (Jr.) | Markenzy Pierre (Fr.) |

DEFENSE (10)

| | | | |
|-----|----|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| DE | 55 | Kendall Coleman (So.) | Brandon Berry (So.) |
| DT | 94 | Steven Clark (Jr.) | 52 Kayton Samuels (Jr.) |
| DT | 95 | Chris Slayton (Jr.) | 98 McKinley Williams (So.) |
| DE | 85 | Josh Black (So.) | Josh Allen (Jr.) |
| WLB | 30 | Parris Bennett (Sr.) | 41 Ryan Guthrie (Jr.) |
| MLB | 4 | Zaire Franklin (Sr.) | 12 Andrew Armstrong (So.) |
| SLB | 23 | Jonathan Thomas (Sr.) | 24 Shyheim Cullen (So.) |
| CB | 10 | Devin M. Butler (Sr.) | Jordan Martin (Sr.) |
| CB | 9 | Juwan Dowels (Jr.) | 28 Christopher Fredrick (So.) |
| FS | 8 | Antwan Cordy (Jr.) | 6 Rodney Williams (Jr.) |
| SS | | Mykelti Williams (So.) | 19 Daivon Ellison (Jr.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | | | |
|---|----|---------------------------|----|----|------------------|
| K | 48 | Cole Murphy (Sr.) | KR | 10 | Sean Riley (So.) |
| P | 35 | Sterling Hofrichter (So.) | PR | 10 | Sean Riley (So.) |

and Jordan Martin (Toledo) bring size to fit the Tampa-2 scheme and much-needed experience. A host of other corners, including Juwan Dowels, who is still recovering from knee surgery, will also compete for snaps. At safety, Cordy may be joined in the starting lineup by junior college signee Mykelti Williams, who redshirted at Notre Dame in 2015 before earning All-America honors at Iowa Western Community College. Junior Daivon Ellison returns as a hard hitter who excels against the run, while sophomore Evan Foster now has the experience to match his length and ball skills. Junior Rodney Williams also is expected to compete for playing time.

SPECIALISTS Syracuse faces a tall task in replacing return man Brisly Estime, who led the nation in punt return average last season. Riley has the inside track for that opportunity, although signee Nykeim Johnson could be given an opportunity if he earns the staff's trust during pre-season camp. Senior placekicker Cole Murphy will look to rebound from a 10-for-18 campaign last season; he made 29-of-38 attempts during his first two years on campus. Sophomore punter Sterling Hofrichter became adept at executing the rugby-style punt last season.

Scouting the ORANGE

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP SYRACUSE

"Being Year 2 in that system, I think they can be dangerous. It's not easy to pick up that offense in a short period of time, not so much from the schematics but really the tempo of it. (Dino) Babers is used to having a track team at that position when he was at Baylor, and I don't see that kind of speed there. They had two good veteran receivers who graduated (Amba Etta-Tawo and Brisly Estime), and they can't run that system without some guys who can beat you vertically. ... They're still going to play Eric Dungey at quarterback. He's got some ability, you know, but he gets hurt all the time. ... Their O-line was atrocious last year. ... Syracuse is the kind team you kind of don't want to play, particularly up there. It's a bad environment, and if your guys don't go in there with their mind right, they can beat you. That's what happened when they beat Virginia Tech. ... Obviously their defense struggled, but it's so easy to point at that. In reality, their offense put them in a bind quite a bit. They'll turn the ball over or go quick three-and-out or put their defense in bad situations."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE | 27.7 |
| DEFENSE | 28.8 |
| MARGIN | -1.1 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|
| OFFENSE | 37.0% |
| DEFENSE | 43.7% |
| MARGIN | -6.7% |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE | 5.5 |
| DEFENSE | 6.9 |
| MARGIN | -1.4 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.0 |
| DEFENSE | 4.8 |
| MARGIN | -0.8 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| PROJECTED | 0.3 |
| ACTUAL | -1 |
| MARGIN | -1.3 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

-6.7 Syracuse had just a 37.0 percent success rate on offense (109th in FBS) and allowed a 43.7 percent success rate on defense (103rd). The minus-6.7 margin was easily the worst in the conference.

-0.8 Issues continued near the end zone. Syracuse averaged just 4.0 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the opponent's 40) and allowed 4.8. That minus-0.8 point margin ranked 117th overall and 13th in the ACC.

100 Syracuse returns 100 percent of its passing yards, 99 percent of rushing yards, and 85 percent of offensive line starts. In terms of tackles, the Orange return 93 percent on the defensive line, 89 percent at linebacker and 100 percent in the secondary.

2017 SYRACUSE ROSTER

| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 15 Culpepper, Rex | 6-3/224 | Fr. | Tampa, FL |
| 2 Dungey, Eric | 6-3/221 | Jr. | Lake Oswego, OR |
| 11 Hasan, Mo | 6-3/194 | Fr. | Coral Gables, FL |
| 16 Mahoney, Zack | 6-2/222 | Sr. | LaGrange Park, IL |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|----------|-----|---------------|
| 26 Perkins, Tyrone | 6-0/201 | Jr. | Glen Head, NY |
| 4 Strickland, Dontae | 5-11/205 | Jr. | Dayton, NJ |
| 29 Zaccardo, Otto | 5-10/195 | So. | Sudbury, MA |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|----------|-----|----------------------|
| 88 Austin, Clay | 5-9/172 | Sr. | Montclair, NJ |
| 83 Avant, Sean | 5-10/213 | Sr. | Miramar, FL |
| 5 Butler, Devin C. | 6-3/202 | So. | District Heights, MD |
| 17 Custis, Jamal | 6-5/219 | Jr. | Philadelphia, PA |
| 86 Enoicy, Adly | 6-5/227 | Jr. | Delray Beach, FL |
| 19 Giffus, Tyler | 6-1/193 | Fr. | Cape Vincent, NY |
| 80 Hahn, K.K. | 5-10/169 | Fr. | Bethesda, MD |
| 8 Ishmael, Steve | 6-2/213 | Sr. | Miami, FL |
| 21 Neal, Moe | 5-11/179 | So. | Gastonia, NC |
| 3 Philips, Ervin | 5-11/184 | Sr. | West Haven, CT |
| 10 Riley, Sean | 5-8/150 | So. | Playa del Rey, CA |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 49 Connors, Jesse | 6-2/222 | Fr. | Pittsford, NY |
| 31 Kleinberg, Kyle | 6-0/215 | Jr. | Armonk, NY |
| 84 Pasquale, Joe | 6-6/244 | Jr. | Valley Stream, NY |
| 14 Pierce, Ravian | 6-3/234 | Jr. | Plantation, FL |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 63 Adams, Evan | 6-6/337 | So. | Norwalk, CT |
| 64 Byrne, Colin | 6-5/300 | So. | Coral Springs, FL |
| 77 Clark, Mike | 6-8/293 | Fr. | Exton, PA |
| 61 Clausman, Samuel | 6-3/327 | So. | Pembroke Pines, FL |
| 60 Conway, Cody | 6-6/300 | Jr. | Plainfield, IL |
| 76 Darney, Keaton | 6-3/277 | Jr. | Los Angeles, CA |
| 69 Davis, Patrick | 6-5/312 | Fr. | Gatineau, QC |
| 72 Duerig, Andrejas | 6-3/322 | So. | Lowell, IN |
| 58 Foster, Donnie | 6-3/314 | Jr. | Savannah, GA |
| 75 Heckel, Sam | 6-4/289 | Fr. | Waukesha, WI |
| 65 McGloster, Jamar | 6-7/302 | Sr. | Hillside, NJ |
| 56 O'Sullivan, Liam | 6-8/267 | Fr. | Chicago, IL |
| 59 Roberts, Aaron | 6-4/289 | Jr. | Chicago, IL |
| 68 Servais, Airon | 6-6/303 | Fr. | Green Bay, WI |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 85 Black, Josh | 6-3/256 | So. | Loves Park, IL |
| 94 Clark, Steven | 6-2/297 | Jr. | Arab, AL |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|
| 55 Coleman, Kendall | 6-3/248 | So. | Indianapolis, IN |
| 51 Nelson, Jaquwan | 6-3/235 | Fr. | Ft. Lauderdale, FL |
| 99 Pickard, Jake | 6-5/254 | So. | Short Hills, NJ |
| 45 Ruff, Kenneth | 6-1/278 | So. | Fort Lauderdale, FL |
| 52 Samuels, Kayton | 6-0/316 | Jr. | Ellenwood, GA |
| 95 Slayton, Chis | 6-4/314 | Jr. | University Park, IL |
| 98 Williams, McKinley | 6-4/294 | So. | Miramar, FL |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 12 Armstrong, Andrew | 6-2/229 | So. | Youngstown, OH |
| 30 Bennett, Parris | 6-0/225 | Sr. | Detroit, MI |
| 24 Cullen, Shyheim | 6-0/213 | So. | Lowell, MA |
| 46 Duka, Adam | 5-9/222 | Fr. | Brecksville, OH |
| 27 Fagan, Nadarius | 6-1/194 | Fr. | Goulds, FL |
| 4 Franklin, Zaire | 6-0/244 | Sr. | Philadelphia, PA |
| 41 Guthrie, Ryan | 6-2/215 | Jr. | Cumming, GA |
| 39 Henderson, Troy | 5-11/220 | So. | Cleveland, OH |
| 40 Lesko, Zack | 6-0/215 | Fr. | Solon, OH |
| 23 Thomas, Jonathan | 6-1/209 | Sr. | Lawrenceville, GA |
| 36 Walton, Tim | 6-2/230 | Fr. | Detroit, MI |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------------|----------|-----|---------------------|
| 18 Bradshaw, Scoop | 5-11/173 | So. | Tampa, FL |
| 10 Butler, Devin M. | 6-1/184 | Sr. | Washington, DC |
| 11 Clarke, Devon | 6-2/186 | Fr. | Kissimmee, FL |
| 8 Cordy, Antwan | 5-8/183 | Jr. | Homestead, FL |
| 9 Dowels, Juwan | 5-10/182 | Jr. | Sunrise, FL |
| 19 Ellison, Daivon | 5-8/175 | Jr. | Linden, NJ |
| 14 Foster, Evan | 6-0/208 | So. | West Bloomfield, MI |
| 28 Fredrick, Christopher | 5-11/194 | So. | Conley, GA |
| 20 Hudson, Cordell | 5-11/173 | Jr. | Largo, FL |
| 16 Jones, Carl | 6-1/182 | So. | Twinsburg, OH |
| Martin, Jordan | 6-3/20 | Sr. | Upper Marlboro, MD |
| 15 Lombardi, Anthony | 6-3/211 | Fr. | Stamford, CT |
| 26 Onwuallu, Sean | 6-1/188 | Jr. | Sylmar, CA |
| 35 Strickland, Kyle | 6-0/176 | Fr. | Roswell, GA |
| 25 Whitner, Kielan | 6-0/196 | Jr. | Lawrenceville, GA |
| 6 Williams, Rodney | 5-10/192 | Jr. | Cherry Hill, NJ |

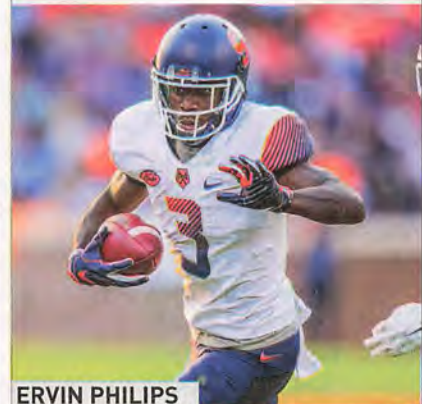
| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 92 Cooney, Nolan (P/K) | 6-3/208 | Fr. | E. Greenwich, RI |
| 38 Grossman, Alex (K) | 5-9/155 | Sr. | Woodbury, NY |
| 53 Hines, Nathan (LS) | 6-6/246 | Jr. | Catonsville, MD |
| 35 Hofrichter, Sterling (P) | 5-9/198 | So. | Valrico, FL |
| 47 Keller, Matt (LS) | 5-11/221 | Jr. | Willow Street, PA |
| 48 Murphy, Cole (K) | 6-3/226 | Sr. | Castaic, CA |
| 90 Womble, Emerson (K) | 5-9/180 | So. | Overland Park, KS |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 2-6 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 2 | Colgate | W | 33-7 |
| Sept. 9 | Louisville | L | 28-62 |
| Sept. 17 | South Florida | L | 20-45 |
| Sept. 24 | at Connecticut | W | 31-24 |
| Oct. 1 | vs. Notre Dame # | L | 33-50 |
| Oct. 8 | at Wake Forest | L | 9-28 |
| Oct. 15 | Virginia Tech | W | 31-17 |
| Oct. 22 | Boston College | W | 28-20 |
| Nov. 5 | at Clemson | L | 0-54 |
| Nov. 12 | NC State | L | 20-35 |
| Nov. 19 | Florida State | L | 14-45 |
| Nov. 26 | at Pittsburgh | L | 61-76 |

#East Rutherford



ERVIN PHILIPS

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|-------------------|-----|-------|-------|----|-----|
| Eric Dungey | 355 | 230 | 2,679 | 15 | 7 |
| Zack Mahoney | 135 | 82 | 943 | 8 | 4 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Dontae Strickland | 162 | 566 | 3.5 | 4 | |
| Moe Neal | 68 | 357 | 5.2 | 2 | |
| Eric Dungey | 125 | 293 | 2.3 | 6 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Amba Etta-Tawo | 94 | 1,482 | 15.8 | 14 | |
| Ervin Philips | 90 | 822 | 9.1 | 6 | |
| Steve Ishmael | 48 | 559 | 11.6 | 1 | |
| Bristy Estime | 48 | 518 | 10.8 | 3 | |
| Dontae Strickland | 21 | 132 | 6.3 | 0 | |

KICKING: Cole Murphy, 10-18 FGs, 36-39 XPs, 66 points

TACKLES: Parris Bennett, 110; Zaire Franklin, 101

SACKS: Chris Slayton, 4.0

INTERCEPTIONS: Rodney Williams, 2

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 25.7 ppg | 10 | 90 |
| Rushing | 119.6 ypg | 13 | 115 |
| Passing | 321.3 ypg | 2 | 11 |
| Total | 440.8 ypg | 6 | 42 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 38.6 ppg | 14 | 120 |
| Rushing | 225.0 ypg | 13 | 108 |
| Passing | 276.1 ypg | 13 | 118 |
| Total | 501.1 ypg | 14 | 122 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| -1 | -0.08 | 10 | 75 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----|---------|-----------------|-------------------------|----|----------|----------------------|
| Josh Allen | DL | 6-4/260 | Torrance, CA | Shard Johnson | WR | 5-11/170 | Miami, FL |
| Brandon Berry | DL | 6-3/230 | Griffin, GA | Kingsley Jonathan | DL | 6-3/245 | Baltimore, MD |
| Eric Coley | DB | 6-2/175 | Manlius, NY | Cameron Jordan | WR | 6-3/195 | Wheatley Hts., NY |
| Dakota Davis | OL | 6-5/315 | Mount Airy, MD | Ifeatu Melifonwu | DB | 6-3/195 | South Grafton, MA |
| Patrick Davis | OL | 6-5/300 | Gatineau, QC | Zach Morton | DL | 6-4/220 | Detroit, MI |
| Tommy DeVito | QB | 6-2/200 | Cedar Grove, NJ | Ravian Pierce | TE | 6-3/225 | Plantation, FL |
| Chris Elmore | FB | 6-2/280 | Chicago, IL | Markenzy Pierre | RB | 5-11/220 | Kissimmee, FL |
| Nadarius Fagan | LB | 6-1/200 | Goulds, FL | Tyrell Richards | LB | 6-3/220 | Brampton, ON |
| Shaquille Grosvenor | DL | 6-2/285 | West Orange, NJ | Allen Stritzinger | RB | 6-0/190 | Clinton Township, MI |
| Ryan Guthrie | LB | 6-2/215 | Cumming, GA | Russell Thompson-Bishop | WR | 6-1/200 | Bloomfield, CT |
| Aaron Hackett | TE | 6-3/230 | Venice, FL | Kadeem Trotter | LB | 6-2/185 | Canton, OH |
| Curtis Harper | DL | 6-2/300 | McKeesport, PA | Mykelti Williams | DB | 5-11/210 | Indianapolis, IN |
| Nykeim Johnson | WR | 5-8/165 | Washington, DC | | | | |

Dino Babers made good use of his first full recruiting cycle at Syracuse, landing a possible quarterback of the future in Tommy DeVito. The New Jersey native was an Elite 11 finalist, The Opening standout and Under Armour All-American, and he turned down post-pledge offers from Texas A&M, Ole Miss and Washington State. Running back Markenzy Pierre could be the most influential early contributor coming directly from high school, while inside linebackers Nadarius Fagan and Tyrell Richards were high targets early in the cycle. In addition to adding depth at critical positions, Syracuse signed six junior college players and two graduate transfers who have the physical capability to compete in the ACC. Junior college tight end Ravian Pierce should contribute right away.



WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS

National Forecast: 52 /// ACC Atlantic Prediction: 5

Dave Clawson stated clearly in 2016 that the expectation for his third season at Wake Forest was a bowl game. The Deacons accomplished just that, ending the season with a Military Bowl victory over No. 23 Temple.

This year, Clawson isn't making bold predictions. While he knows his roster has talent, the Deacons face a more difficult schedule and have questions at key positions.

But his players aren't being shy. "This team can be really, really special next year, and we have this huge opportunity," says tight end Cam Serigne.

For the Deacons to seize that opportunity, they'll need to play beyond their years. Clawson has only nine scholarship seniors this year, but because he hasn't hesitated to play his recruits over those he inherited, this year's lineup has a lot of on-field experience. The bowl game added another month of practices. Clawson hopes to see the biggest change in his offense, which has been among the nation's worst each of his three seasons.

"I really hope we start becoming a more balanced team," he says. "This is the first time where the guys returning on the offensive two-deep will be in their third, fourth or fifth year. The last two years, we've been counting on freshmen and redshirt freshmen to play starting roles."

The offense must improve because the defense, which has carried the program recently, lost four of its top six tacklers. Aside from a strong defensive line and safety Jessie Bates, new coordinator Jay Sawvel needs to patch some holes, and injuries could wreak havoc.

Clawson sees a change in attitude. "Our players are more confident than they have ever been," he says. "There's no indication that these guys are satisfied with what they've accomplished."

QUARTERBACKS The Deacons have struggled to keep John Wolford and Kendall Hinton healthy. Last season, Hinton won the starting job with his play against Duke in the second game, only to suffer a knee injury the next week that would sideline him the rest of the year. Wolford later was so battered that he surrendered the position to Kyle Kearns for a while. Clawson ran Wolford and Hinton for equal reps in the spring, while also prepping Kearns and redshirt freshman Jamie Newman. "Those two guys have not stayed healthy for more than a game or two at a time in the last two years," Clawson says. "Kendall is the starter, but John is getting reps with the ones. He has to, and we have to get a third one ready because neither of them have stayed healthy." Wolford, a senior, has taken a beating for the program, and he's been an accurate passer and deceptive runner (735 yards last year before subtracting losses). But he's thrown 35 interceptions against 30 touchdowns. Hinton threatens defenses with his running ability, and he can throw the deep ball. He's struggled with accuracy. Clawson says he didn't look tentative in the spring on his repaired knee. "Kendall's elusive. He's dynamic. He's going to make plays with his feet."

RUNNING BACKS Wake Forest improved its running game from setting negative records in Clawson's first year to topping 18 other programs in yards per carry last season. That's not much, but Clawson will take it. "There were more times last year our offensive line blocked a play for 2 yards, and we got 4 or 5 yards," he says. Both main backs return to search for that next level: junior Matt Colburn (626 yards) and Cade Carney, who gained 589 yards as a true freshman despite missing three games with a knee injury. But neither back was a threat in the passing game or to break a big run. The Deacons recruited redshirt freshman Arkeem Byrd and freshman Christian Beal for that different dimension. "They're not maybe as big, but they're very shifty and quick," Clawson says. "Those guys have that extra gear when they get into space."

RECEIVERS Labeled as a potential breakout unit last year, this group disappointed. Young players didn't break through, and veterans regressed: Cortez Lewis fell from 47 catches to 32, and Serigne from averaging 50 in his first two seasons to 30 last year. "Is this the year that the wide receiver crew grows up and becomes legitimate threats week-in and week-out in the ACC?" Clawson asks. "I don't know if we had the explosive plays we expected at wide receiver." Tabari Hines (70 catches in two seasons) is solid in the slot, and every player who caught more than one pass last season returns. But the Deacons need Lewis to return to form and another outside receiver to develop. Clawson will look to youth and taller wideouts. Scotty Washington, a 6'5" rising sophomore, doubled his season total with five catches in the bowl game. Waydale

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|----------------------|
| Aug. 31 | Presbyterian |
| Sept. 9 | at Boston College |
| Sept. 16 | Utah State |
| Sept. 23 | at Appalachian State |
| Sept. 30 | Florida State |
| Oct. 7 | at Clemson |
| Oct. 21 | at Georgia Tech |
| Oct. 28 | Louisville |
| Nov. 4 | at Notre Dame |
| Nov. 11 | at Syracuse |
| Nov. 18 | NC State |
| Nov. 25 | Duke |

KEY DEACONS

JESSIE BATES, S He was second-team All-ACC after picking off five passes, returning two for scores, and finishing second on the team in tackles.

DUKE EJIOFOR, DE He finally stayed healthy for a full season, and his edge pressure resulted in 10.5 sacks, two forced fumbles and an interception.

KENDALL HINTON, QB Assuming he's recovered from his knee injury, his dynamic running ability and big arm will make Wake tougher to defend.

KEY LOSSES

MARQUEL LEE, LB A second-team All-ACC pick, he was the defensive leader, posting 20 tackles for a loss and forcing three fumbles.

BRAD WATSON, CB He provided a veteran presence in a young secondary, and in his last two years, he broke up 22 passes and picked off four.

JOSH HARRIS, C He jumped into the lineup as a true freshman and combined with classmate Tyler Hayworth to make 68 starts on a line that improved steadily.

RISEING STAR

Redshirt freshman receiver **Greg Dortch** has drawn Dave Clawson's praise: "Greg Dortch comes out there every day and does something where you're just like, 'Wow.'" He could also turn around a dormant return game.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 6-6, 3-5 ACC

Dave Clawson inherited a program in need of significant repair in 2014, and after two seasons of slow progress, the Demon Deacons took a major step forward last year. Wake Forest earned its first winning record since 2008 and ended a four-year bowl drought. Defense has been the strength of this program under Clawson, but this unit has a new coordinator (Jay Sawvel) and loses standout linebacker Marquel Lee. Still, don't expect much of a drop-off. Wake Forest needs more from its offense to challenge for a winning record in ACC play. Under Clawson's watch, the offense has ranked 13th or worse in the ACC in scoring in all three years. A healthy year from QB Kendall Hinton should help the offense take a step forward and be enough for the Deacons to return to a bowl game. **Postseason: Quick Lane Bowl vs. Michigan State**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

SIDELINE SHIFT After making only one assistant change in his first three seasons, coach Dave Clawson will have four new assistants. Notre Dame hired away defensive coordinator Mike Elko, and Clawson replaced him with Jay Sawvel of Minnesota. "Sometimes it's good to get new ideas and a fresh perspective on things," Clawson says.

OFF SCHEDULE Wake Forest won't have the same scheduling benefits as last season. Home games against Army and Virginia (one of Wake's Coastal foes) are replaced with road games against Notre Dame and Georgia Tech. The Deacons will be the first Power 5 team to visit Appalachian State, a program waiting for this moment since WFU canceled the series in 2001. Two key swing games are on the road: Boston College and Syracuse.

TURNING IT AROUND After two seasons with terrible turnover margins, the Deacons reversed fortunes, finishing tied for 18th in the country. Wake Forest gained 27 turnovers (10th in the country), up from only 11 the year before.

NO THANKS GIVEN The Deacons are 6-24 in November over the last eight seasons, including 1-3 last year. Bowl eligibility could hinge on winning two November games this year: at Syracuse and a home season finale against Duke.

OFF BALANCE Wake Forest has only nine seniors as a result of Clawson clearing out many of Jim Grobe's recruits. However, the junior class numbers 21, as Clawson had to play freshmen in his first season, combining them with the redshirts from the previous year for a big class.

FOREVER YOUNG Two seasons ago, the Deacons had only six of their 209 points scored by upperclassmen. Last season, every one of their 265 points was scored by a player who returns this season.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH
Dave Clawson

RECORD AT SCHOOL
13-24 (3 years)

CAREER RECORD
103-103 (17 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Warren Ruggiero

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Jay Sawvel

LOCATION
Winston-Salem, NC

STADIUM
BB&T Field (31,500)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



DB **JESSIE BATES**



Jones, 6'4", could see action as a freshman. Serigne, who was forced to spend more time blocking, hopes to rebound after his struggles with nagging injuries. Clawson raves about the pass-catching abilities of redshirt freshman tight end Thomas Cole.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN This area has been the team's Achilles heel. The Deacons have allowed at least 39 sacks in each of Clawson's three seasons, and last season, almost 21 percent of carries by running backs were stopped at or behind the line. Wake Forest loses two longtime starters but returns three rising juniors — Justin Herron, Phil Haynes and Ryan Anderson — who already have 62 combined starts. "Those guys are now legitimate ACC offensive linemen," Clawson says. "I don't know how many legitimate ACC offensive linemen we had two or three years ago. Two

years ago, redshirt freshmen were all starting." Depth problems could arise: Outside of the five starters, only two other linemen have seen game action. However, sophomore Nate Gilliam and redshirt freshman Taleni Suhren were highly rated recruits.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN The best unit in the program will need to excel to protect what's behind it. Duke Ejiofor returns to create chaos off the edge: He finished fourth in the ACC with 10.5 sacks, second most in school history. "He's a difference maker," Clawson says. But this unit is more than Ejiofor. It goes six deep with experience, and Clawson spent the spring talking up redshirt freshman Carlos Basham. The expected return of former starter Zeek Rodney from a leave of absence also will help.

LINEBACKERS The Deacons need senior Jaboree Williams to develop into their latest NFL-level linebacker, following Brandon Chubb and Marquel Lee. Williams hasn't quite matched his recruiting hype, and if he falls short again, this unit could struggle. Grant Dawson, a former walk-on, will man the middle. Clawson knows that Dawson can't just be a great story; he needs to produce. "He and Jaboree have become the leaders," Clawson says. "We need him to play well. Grant needs to play at a high level

so we can win football games." Demetrius Kemp returns in the pass-coverage role, but this unit is woefully thin. Sophomores Justin Strnad and Nate Mays haven't shown anything yet, and it seems likely that at least one true freshman will play, either Jeff Burley or Chase Monroe.

DEFENSIVE BACKS The Deacons will feel the loss of Ryan Janvion and Brad Watson, who combined for 70 career starts. Fortunately, Bates burst onto the scene as a redshirt freshman with five interceptions and 100 tackles, leading to second-team All-ACC honors. His speed and anticipation covered up a lot of shaky play elsewhere. At corner, Amari Henderson and Essang Bassey both showed flashes as freshmen, and Clawson called Bassey "mature beyond his years" in the spring. Cedric Jiles, a grad transfer from Mississippi State, could play his way into a starting assignment.

SPECIALISTS The Deacons return All-ACC kicker Mike Weaver, who's been automatic from inside 40 yards, and punter Dom Maggio, who averaged 42 yards per punt with 24 inside the 20. The return units remained at the bottom of the ACC, where they've been for most of the last decade, so Clawson let assistant Adam Scheier walk and brought in Wayne Lineburg.

Scouting the DEMON DEACONS

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP WAKE FOREST

"We felt like they may have been as good of a defense as we faced in the ACC, particularly from a schematic standpoint. Mike Elko was just very sound, thoughtful, had answers but nothing crazy. With limited ability he got guys in the right place, and I've just got great respect for that guy. I know it was a tremendous hire for Notre Dame because I was more concerned about their coordinator than his freaking players. They did hire a good guy from Minnesota (Jay Sawvel), and I think they'll be a pretty solid football team again. ... They had nobody who threatened you vertically on offense. Like, really nobody at all. Their quarterback (John Wolford) has played a lot of football. Not many teams have a four-year starter, so that's an advantage. But they might go with (Kendall Hinton). He's a better athlete. ... It's probably the toughest job in the league, but Dave Clawson has done a good job trying to play sound football and limit mistakes and build it the right way. I have a lot of respect for that guy, but Wake is Wake. They're good enough to beat a couple people and you just have to hope your kids show up ready to play."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 31.2 | 32 |
| DEFENSE | 29.5 | 71 |
| MARGIN | +1.7 | 47 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| OFFENSE | 33.6% | 124 |
| DEFENSE | 39.4% | 48 |
| MARGIN | -5.8% | 108 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.6 | 125 |
| DEFENSE | 5.3 | 39 |
| MARGIN | -0.7 | 104 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 3.8 | 119 |
| DEFENSE | 3.8 | 18 |
| MARGIN | +0.0 | 69 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| PROJECTED | 4.5 | 31 |
| ACTUAL | 8 | 18 |
| MARGIN | +3.5 | 31 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck." Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation.

NUMBERS TO KNOW

33.6

Wake Forest's defense allowed a 39.4 percent success rate (48th in FBS). Unfortunately, the Deacons' 33.6 percent success rate was the fifth-worst in the country, creating a success rate margin of minus-5.8 percent (108th).

+1.7

Wake Forest won four of six one-possession games to finish 7-6, and field position helped to make the difference. The Deacs had a plus-1.7 field-position margin — plus-2.5 in wins, plus-0.0 in losses.

100

Freshmen and sophomores accounted for 100 percent of the Deacs' rushing yards from running backs, 100 percent of receiving yards from wideouts, and 63 percent of offensive line starts. QB John Wolford and a majority of the defense also return.

2017 WAKE FOREST ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 11 Driscoll, Kyle | 6-1/215 | Jr. | Garden City, NY |
| 2 Hinton, Kendall | 6-0/200 | Jr. | Durham, NC |
| 8 Kearns, Kyle | 6-2/195 | So. | San Ramon, CA |
| 12 Newman, Jamie | 6-4/225 | Fr. | Graham, NC |
| 10 Wolford, John | 6-1/200 | Sr. | Jacksonville, FL |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|----------|-----|------------------|
| Beal, Christian | 5-10/180 | Fr. | Kernersville, NC |
| 27 Bell, Tyler | 5-11/215 | Jr. | Mobile, AL |
| 5 Byrd, Arkeem | 6-1/190 | Fr. | Savannah, GA |
| 36 Carney, Cade | 5-11/215 | So. | Advance, NC |
| 22 Colburn, Matt | 5-10/200 | Jr. | Irmo, SC |
| 49 Ndlovu, Trey | 5-7/220 | So. | Hummelstown, PA |
| 21 Robinson, Isaiah | 5-10/220 | Jr. | Charlotte, NC |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|----------|-----|-----------------------|
| 17 Bachman, Alex | 6-0/185 | Jr. | Moorpark, CA |
| 81 Claude, Steven | 6-2/195 | So. | Miami, FL |
| 89 Dortch, Greg | 5-9/160 | Fr. | Highlands Springs, VA |
| 84 Grate, Malik | 6-0/160 | Fr. | Anderson, SC |
| 1 Hines, Tabari | 5-10/175 | Jr. | Florence, SC |
| 83 Johnson, Davis | 5-11/185 | Fr. | Alpharetta, GA |
| 15 Lewis, Cortez | 6-1/210 | Jr. | Demopolis, AL |
| 25 Sriraman, James | 6-3/195 | So. | Raleigh, NC |
| 9 Wade, Chuck | 6-0/195 | Jr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 7 Washington, Scotty | 6-5/220 | So. | Washington, DC |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 23 Chapman, Brandon | 6-5/255 | Fr. | Grove City, OH |
| 87 Cole, Thomas | 6-5/230 | Fr. | Wellsburg, WV |
| 86 Freudenthal, Jack | 6-3/220 | So. | Glen Allen, VA |
| 44 Liverpool, LaRonde | 6-3/225 | Fr. | Virginia Beach, VA |
| 41 Pike, Devin | 6-6/260 | Sr. | Cincinnati, OH |
| 85 Serigne, Cam | 6-3/250 | Sr. | Ashburn, VA |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 70 Anderson, Ryan | 6-6/300 | Jr. | Raleigh, NC |
| 73 Benzinger, Jake | 6-7/285 | So. | Williamston, MA |
| 71 Gilliam, Nathan | 6-5/285 | So. | Knoxville, TN |
| 74 Haynes, Phil | 6-4/300 | Jr. | Raleigh, NC |
| 75 Herron, Justin | 6-5/300 | Jr. | Silver Spring, MD |
| 63 Nash, Je'Vonte | 6-2/280 | Fr. | Orange Park, FL |
| 68 Osterhage, Patrick | 6-4/290 | Jr. | Centerville, OH |
| 60 Suhren, Taleni | 6-5/270 | Fr. | Pineville, NC |
| 55 Terry, A'Lique | 6-1/290 | Sr. | Miami, FL |
| 58 Watson, Tyler | 6-5/285 | Fr. | Roswell, GA |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 98 Basham Jr., Carlos | 6-5/260 | Fr. | Roanoke, VA |
| 54 Bateman, Elontae | 6-2/290 | So. | Memphis, TN |
| 45 Black, Paris | 6-3/255 | So. | Fayetteville, NC |
| 51 Cathoun, Chris | 6-4/245 | Jr. | Alpharetta, GA |
| 14 Dunn, Wendell | 6-3/250 | Sr. | Miami, FL |
| 53 Ejiofor, Duke | 6-4/270 | Sr. | Houston, TX |
| 90 Kamara, Sulaiman | 6-2/275 | Fr. | Richmond, VA |
| 93 Rodney, Zeek | 6-1/295 | Jr. | Rock Hill, SC |
| 96 Stewart, Chris | 6-3/290 | Jr. | Petal, MS |
| 94 Walker, Emmanuel | 6-4/220 | Fr. | Holly Hill, SC |
| 48 Yarbary, Willie | 6-2/280 | Jr. | Augusta, GA |
| 38 Zimmer, Zander | 6-4/225 | Fr. | Winter Park, FL |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|
| 50 Dawson, Grant | 6-1/230 | Sr. | Winston-Salem, NC |
| 99 Fortune, Augustus | 6-0/210 | Fr. | Columbia, TN |
| 34 Kemp, Demetrius | 6-1/215 | Jr. | Demopolis, AL |
| 35 Mays, Nate | 6-1/225 | So. | Dalton, GA |
| 44 McNeil, Kalin | 6-1/230 | Jr. | McLeansville, NC |
| 43 Miller, Connor | 6-2/235 | Fr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 23 Strnad, Justin | 6-2/220 | So. | Palm Harbor, FL |
| 6 Williams, Jaboree | 6-0/235 | Sr. | Deerfield Beach, FL |
| 30 Williams, Ja'Cquez | 6-2/200 | Fr. | Hinesville, GA |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 11 Austin, Dionte | 6-0/175 | Jr. | Baltimore, MD |
| 21 Bassey, Essang | 5-10/180 | So. | Columbus, GA |
| 3 Bates III, Jessie | 6-2/200 | So. | Fort Wayne, IN |
| 29 Delaney, DeAndre | 6-3/205 | Fr. | Morristown, TN |
| 37 Dillon, Thomas | 5-10/180 | Jr. | Houston, TX |
| 2 Glenn, Cameron | 6-1/200 | Jr. | Stone Mountain, GA |
| 36 Good, Keegan | 6-0/185 | Fr. | Pinehurst, NC |
| 10 Henderson, Amari | 6-1/175 | So. | Charlotte, NC |
| Jiles, Cedric | 5-10/182 | Sr. | Clinton, MS |
| 12 Masterson, Luke | 6-2/200 | Fr. | Naples, FL |
| 28 Pearcey, Christopher | 5-11/200 | Jr. | Bradenton, FL |
| 17 Redd, Traveon | 6-0/195 | So. | Martinsville, VA |

| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|-----------------|
| 61 Beckerman, Sam (K) | 5-10/170 | Sr. | Toronto, ON |
| 97 Brown, Ben (K) | 6-2/175 | So. | Chevy Chase, MD |
| 98 Centers, Adam (K) | 6-0/205 | Jr. | Coppell, TX |
| 52 Diemel, Dayton (LS) | 5-10/205 | So. | Hudson, WI |
| 48 Maggio, Dom (P/K) | 6-3/185 | So. | Monkton, MD |
| 7 Weaver, Mike (K/P) | 6-1/195 | Sr. | Pine City, NY |
| 15 Wilson, Garrett (LS) | 6-3/215 | Jr. | Sanford, NC |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 7-6, 3-5 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 1 | Tulane | W | 7-3 |
| Sept. 10 | at Duke | W | 24-14 |
| Sept. 17 | Delaware | W | 38-21 |
| Sept. 24 | at Indiana | W | 33-28 |
| Oct. 1 | at NC State | L | 16-33 |
| Oct. 8 | Syracuse | W | 28-9 |
| Oct. 15 | at Florida State | L | 6-17 |
| Oct. 29 | Army | L | 13-21 |
| Nov. 5 | Virginia | W | 27-20 |
| Nov. 12 | at Louisville | L | 12-44 |
| Nov. 19 | Clemson | L | 13-35 |
| Nov. 26 | Boston College | L | 14-17 |
| Dec. 27 | vs. Temple # | W | 34-26 |

#Military Bowl



KENDALL HINTON

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|----------------|-----|-----|-------|----|-----|
| John Wolford | 299 | 166 | 1,774 | 9 | 10 |
| Kendall Hinton | 19 | 11 | 174 | 0 | 1 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Matt Colburn | 151 | 626 | 4.1 | 2 | |
| Cade Carney | 156 | 589 | 3.8 | 6 | |
| John Wolford | 130 | 521 | 4.0 | 6 | |
| Kendall Hinton | 25 | 125 | 5.0 | 2 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Tabari Hines | 38 | 447 | 11.8 | 3 | |
| Cortez Lewis | 32 | 415 | 13.0 | 1 | |
| Cam Serigne | 30 | 426 | 14.2 | 3 | |
| Chuck Wade | 24 | 245 | 10.2 | 1 | |

KICKING: Mike Weaver, 21-27 FGs, 28-28 XPs, 91 points

TACKLES: Marquel Lee, 105; Jessie Bates, 100

SACKS: Duke Ejiofor, 10.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Jessie Bates, 5

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 20.4 ppg | 13 | 118 |
| Rushing | 145.8 ypg | 12 | 101 |
| Passing | 165.7 ypg | 12 | 113 |
| Total | 311.5 ypg | 13 | 124 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 22.2 ppg | 3 | 23 |
| Rushing | 142.4 ypg | 9 | 33 |
| Passing | 228.2 ypg | 8 | 66 |
| Total | 370.5 ypg | 8 | 40 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| +8 | +0.62 | 2 | 18 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|----|----------|--------------------|-------------------|----|----------|---------------------|
| Mike Allen | DE | 6-5/245 | Sugar Hill, GA | Loic Nya | OL | 6-3/290 | Silver Spring, MD |
| Christian Beal | RB | 5-10/175 | Kernersville, NC | Allan Rappleyea | OL | 6-5/275 | Millbrook, NY |
| Tayvone Bowers | QB | 6-1/220 | Harrisburg, PA | Jaquarii Roberson | WR | 6-1/165 | Murfreesboro, NC |
| Jeff Burley | LB | 6-2/225 | Jackson, GA | Troy Simon | DB | 6-0/190 | Alpharetta, GA |
| Spencer Clapp | OL | 6-6/250 | Gibsonville, NC | Jake Simpson | LB | 6-0/210 | Buford, GA |
| Coby Davis | DB | 5-11/185 | Upper Marlboro, MD | Sage Surratt | WR | 6-3/200 | Lincolnton, NC |
| Tyriq Hardimon | DB | 6-0/190 | Marietta, GA | DJ Taylor | LB | 6-1/225 | Belvidere, TN |
| Waydale Jones | WR | 6-4/185 | Beeville, TX | Ja'Sir Taylor | DB | 5-10/165 | Asbury Park, NJ |
| Sean Maginn | OL | 6-3/260 | Suwanee, GA | Zach Tom | OL | 6-4/280 | Prairieville, LA |
| Chase Monroe | LB | 6-2/220 | Huntersville, NC | Tyler Williams | DT | 6-1/310 | West Palm Beach, FL |

Dave Clawson took a step back in the recruiting rankings after moving up each of his first three seasons, but he did land perhaps the program's top-rated player ever in defensive end Mike Allen. The Deacons were hampered by four coaching changes as Signing Day approached, leading to some key decommits. Clawson continues to recruit well in the regional footprint (11 of 20 from Georgia and North Carolina), including the in-state offensive (wide receiver Sage Surratt) and defensive (linebacker Chase Monroe) players of the year. He filled positions of need at linebacker and defensive back, and Monroe and fellow linebacker Jeff Burley have a chance to play right away. He targeted bigger receivers and landed three. But the bottom third of the class featured more "projects" than previous years, including five "developmental (offensive) linemen," as Clawson calls them. He recruited height and athleticism, saying he can add weight and strength for impact by 2019.



DUKE BLUE DEVILS

National Forecast: 62 /// ACC Coastal Prediction: 6

Once coach David Cutcliffe built the foundation of Duke's turnaround, the trajectory of the once-moribund program turned upward sharply. A 17-season bowl drought ended in 2012. The next season, the Blue Devils appeared in the national polls for the first time since 1994. In 2015, Duke logged its first bowl victory since 1960.

So, when the 2016 Blue Devils experienced the kind of bitter losses and bad breaks that have traditionally haunted Duke football, it felt strangely out of character.

In many ways, the 2016 season was a lost one for Duke. Injuries to key players led to the Blue Devils' fewest wins since 2011, snapping their four-year run of bowl appearances.

"I think, obviously, we had a tough year," Cutcliffe says. "And we all are very aware of that."

But anyone hunting for silver linings didn't have to look far. Not only did Duke manage to post thrilling wins at Notre Dame and against rival North Carolina, but Cutcliffe also found his next quarterback in redshirt freshman Daniel Jones.

If you focus on last season's high points, look at the handful of experienced pieces sprinkled around the roster and throw in a Coastal Division that lacks a clear pecking order, there's reason for optimism this season, albeit of the guarded variety. "I think everybody in our program is excited about what this team can be capable of," Cutcliffe says. "Haven't done anything yet. We'll see."

The story of Duke football under Cutcliffe has been one of gradual progress. Expectations, facilities, visibility and recruiting have all improved vastly during the decade since his hiring. That's why, after an undeniable step backward, Cutcliffe is more determined than ever.

"It's my job, it falls on me. We can't be successful the way we performed a year ago with our record," Cutcliffe says. "Those things are directly going to be my responsibility. We've got to elevate our performance, and I think everybody's aware of that, including the people that were on the field a year ago."

QUARTERBACKS Heading into last season, the starting job was expected to go to senior Thomas Sirk, who led the Blue Devils in both passing and rushing yards in 2015. But after Sirk tore his Achilles in August, the spot went to Jones, who had been tabbed as the program's quarterback of the future. Jones showed that the future had indeed arrived. Named the team's MVP, the 6'5", 210-pounder started every game, setting a freshman school record for total offense with 3,322 yards. He enters the 2017 season with a string of 173 consecutive passes without an interception. Thanks to heavy turnover among ACC quarterbacks, Jones has more starts than any other Coastal Division signal caller. Sirk opted to leave the program, meaning the battle to be Jones' backup will likely come down to either senior Parker Boehme or sophomore Quentin Harris.

RUNNING BACKS As the only Duke running back to carry the ball in each game, senior Shaun Wilson was one of the few constants on an offense that had its share of upheaval. He initially split time with then-senior Jela Duncan but ended up as the featured back once Duncan went out with a torn Achilles with four games left. Wilson ended up leading the team with 623 rushing yards to go along with four touchdowns. He'll carry a heavy load once again this season as the Blue Devils try to work in a large cast of complementary backs. The two most intriguing members of that group are redshirt freshmen Brittain Brown and Elijah Deveaux. The 210-pound Deveaux is a stout, physical back who is expected to make a difference in pass blocking, while Brown, who has impressed coaches with his ability as a rusher, will likely see more carries.

RECEIVERS Jones should have an array of experienced targets in the passing game. Junior receiver T.J. Rahming is back for a third season as a starter. His 70 catches last season were 36 more than the next-closest Blue Devil. Junior Johnathan Lloyd returns after catching three touchdowns in his first season since converting from cornerback. Junior Chris Taylor finished the season with 29 catches and 315 yards. It's worth noting that 22 catches and 222 yards came in the final five games. Expect senior Quay Chambers, sophomore Aaron Young and redshirt freshman Scott Bracey to see their share of snaps as well. At tight end, the Blue Devils must replace starter Erich Schneider, who caught three touchdowns last season. But with the return of Tennessee transfer Daniel Helm and Davis Koppenhaver, juniors who caught two touchdowns apiece last season, an answer should be easy to find.

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Sept. 2 | NC Central |
| Sept. 9 | Northwestern |
| Sept. 16 | Baylor |
| Sept. 23 | at North Carolina |
| Sept. 29 | Miami |
| Oct. 7 | at Virginia |
| Oct. 14 | Florida State |
| Oct. 21 | Pittsburgh |
| Oct. 28 | at Virginia Tech |
| Nov. 11 | at Army |
| Nov. 18 | Georgia Tech |
| Nov. 25 | at Wake Forest |

KEY BLUE DEVILS

DANIEL JONES, QB With good size, good mobility, a live arm and a coach who knows how to develop quarterbacks, expectations are high for Jones.

JOE GILES-HARRIS, LB Duke's leading tackler should be able to build on a season that featured a 16-tackle performance against North Carolina.

BEN HUMPHREYS, LB Humphreys flourished in his spot at the center of Duke's defense, racking up 106 tackles and 4.5 sacks.

KEY LOSSES

A.J. WOLF, DT Wolf racked up 5.5 sacks last season as the linchpin of Duke's defensive line.

DEVON EDWARDS, DB/KR As a defensive back, Edwards was a prolific tackler, but his ability as a kick returner is what he'll be remembered for most.

JELA DUNCAN, RB One half of the Blue Devils' running back tandem, Duncan scored six touchdowns in seven games last season.

RISING STAR

Duke will be deep at receiver, but sophomore **Aaron Young** should elbow his way into the mix. After catching 11 passes — two for touchdowns — last season, the 6'2", 200-pounder was a star in the spring, hauling in a pair of long passes in the spring showcase.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 4-8, 2-6 ACC

Injuries and a tough schedule last season were largely to blame for Duke missing a bowl for the first time since 2011. David Cutcliffe's team has its share of question marks for 2017, but a full year of starting experience from quarterback Daniel Jones should help close the gap after losing four games by 10 points or less. The departure of two key starters on the line is the top concern for the offense. After holding opponents to 5.4 yards per play in 2015, the defense regressed and allowed 6.3 in 2016. This unit returns one of the top linebacker groups in the ACC but suffered heavy losses up front and in the secondary. If Duke successfully reloads on defense and Jones takes a step forward, the Blue Devils will end their bowl drought at one year. If not, they will battle Virginia to stay out of the basement in the ACC Coastal.

OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

KEEPING PERSPECTIVE While the 2016 campaign largely fell flat, there's little in the way of angst surrounding David Cutcliffe. Most of that is due to the fact that the dark ages of Duke football don't seem like that long ago. It also helps that if you were to ask a Duke football fan which two games on the 2016 schedule would be the most fun to see the Blue Devils win, they'd probably come up with Notre Dame and North Carolina. Duke won both.

ALL QUIET ON THE COACHING FRONT This time last year, the Blue Devils were still dealing with the aftershocks of a reshuffled coaching lineup. Former offensive coordinator Scottie Montgomery had left to take the head coaching gig at East Carolina and had taken a key staffer with him. Two more longtime assistants moved into administrative roles or retired, leaving openings that had to be filled. This season, Cutcliffe's staff gets to experience some welcome continuity as everyone stayed put.

KICKING AND SCREAMING Ten times since the turn of the century, Blue Devils kickers have missed five or more field goal tries. Five times, shaky kicking games have led to 12 or fewer field goal attempts in a season. But for a four-year run, kicker Ross Martin handled the situation ably, earning All-ACC accolades. Last season, with Martin gone, freshman A.J. Reed made 3-of-10 field goal tries and had the first missed extra point by a Duke kicker since 2012. Once again facing the prospect of an iffy kick game, Cutcliffe has made finding an answer at the position a priority.

NO EASY WEEK Of Duke's 12 games, 10 come against teams that reached bowl games last season. The lone FCS opponent, North Carolina Central, won the MEAC and appeared in the Celebration Bowl.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

David Cutcliffe

RECORD AT SCHOOL

52-61 (9 years)

CAREER RECORD

96-90 (15 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Zac Roper

DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS

Ben Albert, Jim Knowles

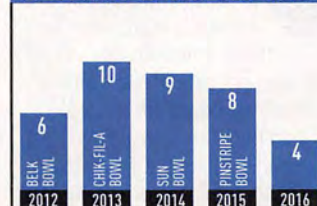
LOCATION

Durham, NC

STADIUM

Wallace Wade Stadium (40,004)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



QB **DANIEL JONES**



OFFENSIVE LINEMEN The Blue Devils' line will need to find some continuity quickly as it tries to replace two starters and work in some new faces. The Blue Devils will have seniors back in center Austin Davis and tackle Gabe Brandner, although Brandner missed the spring while recovering from a broken ankle. Junior Zach Harmon started the last 10 games of 2016 at right guard. Sophomore Julian Santos played in nine games last season, becoming the first true freshman to play such a heavy role on a Cutcliffe-coached offensive line. Expect him to fill the starting spot at left guard, while Evan Lisle, a graduate transfer from Ohio State, is the favorite to nail down a tackle spot. Sophomore Zach Baker, junior Christian Harris and senior Sterling Korona all return after seeing significant time last season.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|----|-------------------------|
| WR 5 | Johnathan Lloyd (Jr.) | 7 | Keyston Fuller (So.) |
| WR 82 | Chris Taylor (Jr.) | 11 | Scott Bracey (Fr.) |
| WR 3 | T.J. Rahming (Jr.) | 8 | Aaron Young (So.) |
| LT 76 | Gabe Brandner (Sr.) | 77 | Robert Kraeling (Fr.) |
| LG 65 | Julian Santos (So.) | 78 | Sterling Korona (Sr.) |
| C 50 | Austin Davis (Sr.) | 69 | Zach Baker (So.) |
| RG 63 | Zach Harmon (Jr.) | 66 | Jaylen Miller (Fr.) |
| RT 72 | Evan Lisle (Sr.) | 70 | Christian Harris (Jr.) |
| TE 80 | Daniel Helm (Jr.) | 81 | Davis Koppenhaver (Jr.) |
| QB 17 | Daniel Jones (So.) | 18 | Quenten Harris (So.) |
| RB 29 | Shaun Wilson (Sr.) | 22 | Brittain Brown (Fr.) |

DEFENSE (5)

| | | | |
|--------|------------------------|----|------------------------|
| DE 59 | Tre Hornbuckle (So.) | 94 | Twazanga Mugala (So.) |
| DT 99 | Mike Ramsay (Sr.) | 95 | Trevon McSwain (So.) |
| DT 92 | Edgar Cerenord (Jr.) | 97 | Quaven Ferguson (Jr.) |
| DE 90 | Terrell Lucas (So.) | 98 | Chidi Okonya (So.) |
| ILB 34 | Ben Humphreys (Jr.) | 49 | Koby Quansah (So.) |
| OLB 44 | Joe Giles-Harris (So.) | 43 | Tinashe Bere (Jr.) |
| CB 14 | Bryon Fields Jr. (Sr.) | 35 | Antone Williams (Fr.) |
| CB 28 | Mark Gilbert (So.) | 39 | Zach Muñiz (Sr.) |
| S 9 | Jeremy McDuffie (Jr.) | 30 | Brandon Feamster (So.) |
| S 21 | Alonzo Saxton II (Sr.) | 16 | Dylan Singleton (So.) |
| S 13 | Jordan Hayes (So.) | 2 | Javon Jackson (Fr.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|---------------------|-------|--------------------|
| K 42 | Austin Parker (So.) | KR 29 | Shaun Wilson (Sr.) |
| P 42 | Austin Parker (So.) | PR 28 | Mark Gilbert (So.) |

DEFENSIVE BACKS Safety Alonzo Saxton II and cornerback Bryon Fields are the only two starters returning to a secondary that will lean on several younger players. The Blue Devils bid farewell to cornerback Breon Borders and safety DeVon Edwards — two players who had become fixtures. Safety Corbin McCarthy, who led the 2016 Blue Devils with 12 tackles for a loss, is also among the eight lettermen Duke lost in the defensive backfield. After spending the previous two seasons at cornerback, junior Jeremy McDuffie will see time at one of Duke's three safety spots. Saxton and sophomore Jordan Hayes will likely handle the other two. Look for Mark Gilbert to have the inside track to the other cornerback spot after turning heads as a true freshman.

SPECIALISTS Sophomore Austin Parker will be back at punter, where he averaged 40.9 yards per attempt before injuring his collarbone seven games into the season. The kicking job is less settled. Freshman A.J. Reed converted on just 3-of-10 field goal tries. He'll get another shot at the job, but Parker and others will, too. Wilson, last season's leading kick returner, will have a role in the return game again. With no clear-cut favorite for handling punts, he may be asked to do more.

Scouting the BLUE DEVILS

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP DUKE

"Their talent may not be good enough on a given Saturday, but they usually don't beat themselves. ... They have the quarterback (Daniel Jones) back. He's more of a dual-threat guy, and they can give you a unique look with him offensively with the quarterback run game out of the pistol, which not a lot of people do in our league. It's a little bit more of a downhill type of run game and not so much with the power reads. ... The OL coach (John Latina) retired (after the 2015 season), and I don't know if that has anything to do with it or maybe they just had some young guys and needed time to come together, but we ate them alive up front. ... They had a lot of injuries last year, but I'll tell you this much: They won't just sit back and let a 4-8 record stand. They'll do something. They have a sound system and that coaching staff is too good to do that again. What those guys have done is nothing short of amazing. ... Nobody at receiver really scared you, but I liked their tailbacks. No. 29 (Shaun Wilson) plays bigger than he is. ... On defense, they have a lot of experience up front. They play sort of a high-risk, high-reward scheme."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 29.0 | 81 |
| DEFENSE | 29.3 | 68 |
| MARGIN | -0.3 | 75 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| OFFENSE | 40.6% | 68 |
| DEFENSE | 39.1% | 42 |
| MARGIN | +1.5% | 55 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 5.2 | 109 |
| DEFENSE | 6.3 | 105 |
| MARGIN | -1.1 | 117 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 3.7 | 122 |
| DEFENSE | 4.4 | 62 |
| MARGIN | -0.7 | 113 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| PROJECTED | -5.5 | 110 |
| ACTUAL | -4 | 90 |
| MARGIN | +1.5 | 47 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

4.6 The Blue Devils averaged 4.6 yards per play on first down, third worst in the country. They couldn't establish the run (3.2 yards per carry on first down), which put too much pressure on freshman QB Daniel Jones.

3.7 Despite great red zone passing from Jones (nine TDs, no interceptions, 194.5 passer rating), Duke averaged just 3.7 points per scoring opportunity. They were lacking in both big-play TDs and short-yardage success.

23.9 Duke's defense did what it could and was successfully aggressive up front. The Blue Devils had a 23.9 percent rate of run stuffs at or behind the line (17th in FBS), a 7.5 percent standard downs sack rate (13th), and a 9.4 percent passing downs sack rate (25th).

2017 DUKE ROSTER

| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|---------|-----|------------------------|
| 12 Boehme, Parker | 6-2/220 | Sr. | Jacksonville Beach, FL |
| 18 Harris, Quentin | 6-1/190 | So. | Wilton, CT |
| 17 Jones, Daniel | 6-5/210 | So. | Charlotte, NC |
| 15 Katrenick, Chris | 6-3/205 | Fr. | Algonquin, IL |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|----------|-----|----------------|
| 22 Brown, Brittain | 6-1/195 | Fr. | Canton, GA |
| 45 Carter, Griffin | 5-11/180 | Jr. | San Marino, CA |
| 36 Deveaux, Elijah | 6-0/210 | Fr. | Waxhaw, NC |
| 6 Pierre, Nicodem | 6-2/220 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 29 Wilson, Shaun | 5-9/180 | Sr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 47 Wolitzer, Ryan | 5-9/185 | So. | Purchase, NY |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 11 Bracey, Scott | 6-2/200 | Fr. | Richmond, VA |
| 19 Chambers, Quay | 6-3/220 | So. | Monroe, NC |
| 7 Fuller, Keyston | 6-0/180 | Sr. | Griffin, GA |
| 84 Lee, Trevon | 6-1/185 | Jr. | Plantation, FL |
| 5 Lloyd, Johnathan | 6-0/190 | Jr. | Graham, NC |
| 3 Rahming, T.J. | 5-10/165 | Jr. | Powder Springs, GA |
| 86 Sampson, Sayvon | 6-2/170 | Jr. | Lumberton, NC |
| 82 Taylor, Chris | 6-1/180 | Jr. | Miramar, FL |
| 8 Young, Aaron | 6-2/200 | So. | Murrieta, CA |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|--------------|
| 89 Birmingham, Mark | 6-4/235 | Fr. | Ashburn, VA |
| 80 Helm, Daniel | 6-4/240 | Jr. | Chatham, IL |
| 81 Koppenhaver, Davis | 6-4/230 | Jr. | Valencia, CA |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|---------|-----|------------------------|
| 69 Baker, Zach | 6-4/295 | So. | Green Cove Springs, FL |
| 76 Brandner, Gabe | 6-6/285 | Sr. | Blythewood, SC |
| 67 Bulleit, Clark | 6-3/275 | Jr. | Tampa, FL |
| 50 Davis, Austin | 6-4/290 | Sr. | Mansfield, TX |
| 62 Gourley, Alex | 6-1/290 | So. | Mooresville, NC |
| 63 Harmon, Zach | 6-3/285 | Jr. | Toledo, OH |
| 70 Harris, Christian | 6-6/295 | Jr. | Suwanee, GA |
| 78 Korona, Sterling | 6-7/290 | Sr. | San Antonio, TX |
| 77 Kraeling, Robert | 6-7/270 | Fr. | Bishop, GA |
| 72 Lisle, Evan | 6-7/310 | Sr. | Centerville, OH |
| 74 McNeill, Trip | 6-5/300 | Jr. | Advance, NC |
| 66 Miller, Jaylen | 6-3/315 | Jr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 73 Rosene, Reno | 6-7/325 | So. | Westlake Village, CA |
| 65 Santos, Julian | 6-3/315 | So. | East Lake, FL |
| 75 Smith, Liam | 6-4/270 | Fr. | Little Silver, NJ |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|
| 55 Boyce, Brandon | 6-0/255 | Jr. | Fort Lauderdale, FL |
| 92 Cerenord, Edgar | 6-1/300 | Jr. | Miami, FL |

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 56 Doyle, Danny | 6-1/215 | Jr. | Bradenton, FL |
| 97 Ferguson, Ouaven | 6-2/305 | Jr. | Easley, SC |
| 59 Hornbuckle, Tre | 6-4/235 | So. | Murray, KY |
| 53 Jones, Scott | 6-3/230 | So. | Newport News, VA |
| 90 Lucas, Terrell | 6-3/230 | So. | Hollywood, FL |
| 95 McSwain, Trevon | 6-6/265 | So. | Suwanee, GA |
| 52 Morris, Zach | 6-3/285 | So. | Ringgold, GA |
| 94 Mugala, Twazanga | 6-3/230 | So. | Charlotte, NC |
| 98 Okonya, Chidi | 6-6/220 | So. | Riverdale, GA |
| 91 Price, Marquies | 6-6/245 | Jr. | Fort Valley, GA |
| 99 Ramsay, Mike | 6-2/295 | Sr. | Smyrna, GA |
| 60 Waddell, Noah | 6-3/250 | So. | Medina, OH |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 43 Bere, Tinashe | 6-1/230 | Jr. | Cincinnati, OH |
| 24 Carmichael, Xavier | 6-0/220 | Sr. | Eight Mile, AL |
| 41 Gagnon, Xander | 6-3/225 | Fr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 54 Gehsmann, Kevin | 6-0/225 | Jr. | Greensboro, NC |
| 44 Giles-Harris, Joe | 6-2/220 | So. | Nyack, NY |
| 32 Hill, Brandon | 6-3/220 | Fr. | Orangeburg, SC |
| 34 Humphreys, Ben | 6-2/215 | Jr. | Newport Beach, CA |
| 49 Quansah, Koby | 6-1/220 | So. | Manchester, CT |
| 60 Rodio, Lee | 5-8/218 | So. | Durham, NC |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|----------|-----|------------------|
| 30 Feamster, Brandon | 6-3/210 | So. | Exton, PA |
| 14 Fields, Bryon | 5-11/180 | Sr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 28 Gilbert, Mark | 6-1/175 | So. | Fayetteville, NC |
| 13 Hayes, Jordan | 6-0/180 | So. | Loganville, GA |
| 4 Hudzick, Myles | 5-10/165 | Fr. | Reston, VA |
| 2 Jackson, Javon | 5-11/180 | Fr. | Tyrone, GA |
| 9 McDuffie, Jeremy | 5-11/170 | Jr. | Snellville, GA |
| 40 Morgenstern, Jacob | 6-4/215 | Fr. | Lagrange, NY |
| 39 Muiñiz, Zach | 5-11/170 | Sr. | Chesterfield, MO |
| 21 Saxton II, Alonzo | 5-11/180 | Sr. | Columbus, OH |
| 16 Singleton, Dylan | 5-11/190 | So. | Dacula, GA |
| 10 Waters, Marquis | 6-1/190 | Fr. | Delray Beach, FL |
| 35 Williams, Antone | 5-11/175 | Fr. | Atlanta, GA |

| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 54 Bruneau, Bronson (LS) | 6-5/230 | Sr. | Lakeville, MN |
| 61 Duffy, Colin (LS) | 6-0/200 | Sr. | Newport Beach, CA |
| 47 Kline, Will (K) | 6-1/190 | Sr. | Montclair, NJ |
| 42 Parker, Austin (P) | 6-1/180 | So. | Mount Pleasant, NC |
| 48 Reed, AJ (K) | 5-11/175 | So. | Prattville, AL |
| 11 Skapek, Tim (K) | 5-8/180 | So. | Dallas, TX |
| 94 Wareham, Collin (K) | 5-9/175 | Sr. | McLean, VA |
| 58 Wyatt, Ben (LS) | 6-1/230 | Fr. | Davidson, NC |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 4-8, 1-7 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|-----------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | NC Central | W | 49-6 |
| Sept. 10 | Wake Forest | L | 14-24 |
| Sept. 17 | at Northwestern | L | 13-24 |
| Sept. 24 | at Notre Dame | W | 38-35 |
| Oct. 1 | Virginia | L | 20-34 |
| Oct. 8 | Army | W | 13-6 |
| Oct. 14 | at Louisville | L | 14-24 |
| Oct. 29 | at Georgia Tech | L | 35-38 |
| Nov. 5 | Virginia Tech | L | 21-24 |
| Nov. 10 | North Carolina | W | 28-27 |
| Nov. 19 | at Pittsburgh | L | 14-56 |
| Nov. 26 | at Miami | L | 21-40 |



SHAUN WILSON

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-------|----|-----|
| Daniel Jones | 430 | 270 | 2,836 | 16 | 9 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Shaun Wilson | 151 | 623 | 4.1 | 4 | |
| Daniel Jones | 141 | 486 | 3.4 | 7 | |
| Jela Duncan | 88 | 450 | 5.1 | 6 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| T.J. Rahming | 70 | 742 | 10.6 | 1 | |
| Johnathan Lloyd | 34 | 301 | 8.9 | 3 | |
| Erich Schneider | 30 | 269 | 9.0 | 3 | |
| Anthony Nash | 29 | 398 | 13.7 | 2 | |
| Chris Taylor | 29 | 315 | 10.9 | 1 | |

KICKING: AJ Reed, 3-10 FGs, 37-38 XPs, 46 points

TACKLES: Joe Giles-Harris, 107; Ben Humphreys 106

SACKS: A.J. Wolf, 5.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Deondre Singleton, 3

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 23.3 ppg | 11 | 110 |
| Rushing | 153.6 ypg | 8 | 89 |
| Passing | 239.8 ypg | 9 | 60 |
| Total | 393.3 ypg | 10 | 76 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 28.2 ppg | 11 | 66 |
| Rushing | 174.9 ypg | 11 | 66 |
| Passing | 239.8 ypg | 10 | 78 |
| Total | 414.7 ypg | 11 | 67 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| -4 | -0.33 | 12 | 93 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|------------------------|----|----------|------------------|
| Josh Blackwell | DB | 5-11/180 | Buford, GA |
| Michael Carter II | DB | 5-10/175 | Douglasville, GA |
| Rakavius Chambers | OL | 6-3/320 | Opelika, AL |
| Victor Dimukeje | DL | 6-2/265 | Baltimore, MD |
| Ben Frye | DL | 6-3/255 | Dublin, OH |
| Noah Gray | TE | 6-4/230 | Leominster, MA |
| Marvin Hubbard III | RB | 5-9/185 | Tyrone, GA |
| Deon Jackson | RB | 6-0/210 | Atlanta, GA |
| Leonard Johnson | DB | 6-1/185 | Hayden, AL |
| Drew Jordan | LB | 6-2/255 | Suwanee, GA |
| Chris Katrenick | QB | 6-2/205 | Algonquin, IL |
| Patrick Leitten | OL | 6-7/270 | Brentwood, TN |
| Jake Marwede | TE | 6-5/240 | Wilmette, IL |
| Damani Neal | DB | 5-10/190 | Sterling, VA |
| Axel Nyembwe | DL | 6-2/310 | Bethesda, MD |
| Damond Philyaw-Johnson | WR | 6-1/180 | Pensacola, FL |
| Jacob Rimmer | OL | 6-7/290 | Milan, TN |
| Chris Rumph II | DL | 6-3/215 | Gainesville, FL |
| Derrick Tangelo | DL | 6-2/290 | Potomac, MD |
| Will Taylor | OL | 6-3/280 | Snellville, GA |
| Marquis Waters | DB | 6-0/190 | Delray Beach, FL |
| Lummie Young IV | DB | 6-1/200 | Anderson, SC |

Perhaps the most notable thing about the players David Cutcliffe's staff inked on Signing Day is that none of them hailed from North Carolina. Cutcliffe says that his coaches evaluated plenty of talent from the state, but for various reasons didn't find the right targets. But Cutcliffe says that he's thrilled with the commitment he saw from the players he got — 22 of the 24 players who visited signed with Duke. Speedy linebacker Drew Jordan will likely have to wait his turn behind the Blue Devils' current crop of contributors, but safeties Michael Carter and Damani Neal could sneak onto the field with snaps possibly to be had in the secondary. After a focus on speed in previous classes, the 2017 haul was light on skill position standouts, but running backs Deon Jackson and Marvin Hubbard and tight end Jake Marwede could make an impact down the road.



GEORGIA TECH YELLOW JACKETS

National Forecast: 36 /// ACC Coastal Prediction: 4

Paul Johnson's tenure at Georgia Tech has had ebbs and flows, but every time the program has drifted toward uncertainty, it has roared back to validate his system. Midway through last season, the Yellow Jackets were 3-3 and had won just two of their previous 12 ACC games dating back to an unexpected 2015 swoon. With a new athletics director arriving, Johnson's triple-option offense struggling and a second consecutive losing season potentially on the horizon, Johnson seemed to be on shakier ground than ever. But a late-season surge to 9-4, including victories at Virginia Tech and Georgia, has once again built momentum.

With eight defensive starters returning, plus the bulk of a promising young offensive line and every skill position player except quarterback, it appears the door is open once again for Georgia Tech to contend in the Coastal, a division it has won four times under Johnson.

"There's such a fine line between winning nine games or five," Johnson says. "It's whether you can win the close ones, get a break here and there and keep healthy. I've been a head coach for 20 years, and in 18 of them we've been in the postseason, so you have to look at the body of work."

There's no doubt Georgia Tech's improvement in the last half of 2016 has ignited its fan base and built expectations. And with a new quarterback following the departure of three-year starter Justin Thomas, Johnson can only wait and see whether this team will fall on the right side of those close games that determine whether he's viewed as a success or failure.

QUARTERBACKS There are high hopes for Georgia Tech's offense, but Johnson hasn't had this much quarterback uncertainty since 2013. Junior Matthew Jordan, who often handled short-yardage situations last season and started in the Jackets' 30-20 upset at Virginia Tech, will begin fall camp in the strongest position. But Johnson also likes junior TaQuon Marshall, who offers more dynamic playmaking potential and started his career as an A-back because of his speed. It's unlikely either can match Thomas' production in the passing game, so Johnson may try both to see who can execute the option with the kind of proficiency he demands. "We're comfortable with Matthew, and he's a tough kid that knows the offense and understands it," Johnson says. "But we've got some really good athletes at that position, and we'll just have to see how they play."

RUNNING BACKS From the moment he stepped on campus, bruising 5'10", 217-pound B-back Dedrick Mills didn't look or play like a typical freshman. And coming off a 31-carry, 169-yard performance against Kentucky in the TaxSlayer Bowl, the Jackets' leading rusher is poised to potentially become one of the best backs Johnson has coached at Georgia Tech. "His biggest challenge is to maintain his weight levels and try to increase his speed a little bit, but he's just a good player who enjoys the game," Johnson says. Mills headlines a group of backs that returns largely intact. (Marcus Marshall, who rushed for 624 yards in 2016, transferred to James Madison.) Clinton Lynch, who averaged 11.2 yards per rush and is also the Jackets' best receiver out of the backfield, will be counted on to further enhance his home run playmaking potential while J.J. Green and Qua Searcy have been meaningful contributors in the running game.

RECEIVERS Without Thomas' above-average proficiency as a passer, it's uncertain how many big plays Georgia Tech's receivers will have the chance to make in 2017. Still, starters Ricky Jeune and Brad Stewart are a solid returning core after catching a combined 44 balls last year. Jeune has good hands and a strong frame, improving each year as a perimeter blocker. Stewart developed more of a niche last year as a go-to option on third down and had a big 64-yard catch in the upset at Georgia. Johnson is hoping for development from sophomore Jalen Camp "because he can be the next really good receiver we've had here if he'll keep working."

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Georgia Tech's 258.1 rushing yards per game lagged behind its standards, but without three freshmen who stepped up and played big roles up front, "it would have been a trainwreck," Johnson says. Now those freshmen have turned into sophomores, and the offensive line should be a strength again. Though there are concerns beyond the top eight, it's a particularly strong group on the interior. Georgia Tech is confident in Kenny Cooper, who got significant playing time as a freshman, replacing Freddie Burden at center, while Parker Braun looked like a potential star in his rookie year at left guard. Junior Will Bryan has played a lot of snaps over two years and should be steady at right guard, while 6'7",

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|--------------------|
| Sept. 4 | Tennessee # |
| Sept. 9 | Jacksonville State |
| Sept. 16 | at UCF |
| Sept. 23 | Pittsburgh |
| Sept. 30 | North Carolina |
| Oct. 12 | at Miami |
| Oct. 21 | Wake Forest |
| Oct. 28 | at Clemson |
| Nov. 4 | at Virginia |
| Nov. 11 | Virginia Tech |
| Nov. 18 | at Duke |
| Nov. 25 | Georgia |

#Mercedes-Benz Stadium

KEY YELLOW JACKETS

DEDRICK MILLS, RB Gives you the kind of physical, between-the-tackles running any good option offense relies on to churn out first downs.

CLINTON LYNCH, RB Lynch is electric with the ball in his hands but needs more touches than the 37 rushes and 16 receptions he got last season.

LANCE AUSTIN, CB It was risky to throw in his direction; led ACC with 15 passes defended, including three INTs.

KEY LOSSES

JUSTIN THOMAS, QB A dynamic athlete who accounted for more than 4,600 passing and 2,100 rushing yards in his three seasons as a starter.

PATRICK GAMBLE, DT Had a hand in many of the Yellow Jackets' big plays, accounting for 7.5 of the team's 18 sacks last season.

HARRISON BUTKER, PK Became a huge weapon by the end of his career, making 15-of-17 field goals as a senior, including all eight attempts from beyond 40 yards.

RISING STAR

Arguably the highest-rated player Georgia Tech signed in 2016, defensive end **Jordan Woods** missed the season with a shoulder injury. Woods could make an impact coming off his redshirt year at a position where Tech needs pass-rushing pop.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 7-5, 4-4 ACC

A year after the program's worst record under Paul Johnson, the Yellow Jackets rebounded to 9-4 and will be a dark horse team to watch in the Coastal title picture for 2017. The option attack is in good hands with the emergence of B-back Dedrick Mills, and Matthew Jordan should provide a seamless transition from Justin Thomas at quarterback. Replacing center Freddie Burden and finding the right mix in the trenches is Johnson's top concern on offense. The defense gave up an average of 29.0 points in ACC games last year and suffered key losses in the front seven. The development of this unit is likely to decide how high Georgia Tech finishes in the Coastal. The schedule is favorable: The Yellow Jackets host key swing games against North Carolina, Pitt and Virginia Tech. **Postseason: Military Bowl vs. Navy**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

SEC SUCCESS After beating Kentucky in the TaxSlayer Bowl, Paul Johnson gleefully observed that his team was 3-0 in the SEC East last season (it also beat Vanderbilt and Georgia), with a game against Tennessee to open 2017 at Atlanta's new Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Johnson is 9-8 against SEC teams and enjoys tweaking the rival league. "We've gotten tweaked so much since I've been here the other way. When you get your chance you better take advantage of it," he says.

SWILLING LEGACY As a college football Hall of Famer, former Georgia Tech great Pat Swilling's name is enshrined at Bobby Dodd Stadium. Now his sons will play in it. Swilling's biological son, cornerback Tre Swilling, and adopted son, linebacker Bruce Jordan-Swilling, both signed with the Yellow Jackets this year and could play roles as freshmen.

MAKING A COMMITMENT New athletics director Todd Stansbury, a former Yellow Jackets linebacker, has been a welcome addition for Johnson. For years, Johnson has pushed for increased spending on facilities and expansion of his support staff to keep up with the rest of the ACC. But Georgia Tech remained behind the curve, and Johnson's frosty relationship with former AD Mike Bobinski didn't help. But a change in administration should get the ball rolling in the right direction. "[Stansbury] understands and agrees with me we've got to do some things," Johnson says.

STAFF CHANGES Georgia Tech lost a key staff member when quarterbacks coach Bryan Cook left to become offensive coordinator at Georgia Southern. Johnson elevated Craig Candeto, who was an assistant director of football operations last season, to replace him. Candeto was the starting quarterback under Johnson at Navy in 2003 when the Midshipmen won eight games and went to a bowl game.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Paul Johnson

RECORD AT SCHOOL

70-48 (9 years)

CAREER RECORD

177-87 (20 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Paul Johnson

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Ted Roof

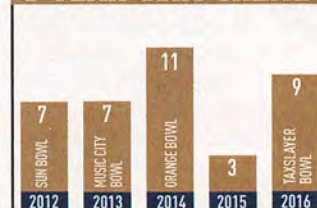
LOCATION

Atlanta, GA

STADIUM

Bobby Dodd Stadium (55,000)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



RB **DEDRICK MILLS**



370-pound senior Shamire Devine is an experienced backup at both guard spots. Sophomore Jahaziel Lee, who projects to start at left tackle, had never played offensive line but switched from defense when he arrived at Tech and was a strong contributor right away. He should improve with more experience while playing opposite senior Andrew Marshall.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN There's uncertainty up front with just one returning starter, but that could be viewed as an opportunity for coordinator Ted Roof to try new combinations and reignite a pass rush that fell flat with just 18 sacks last season. "We have to do a much better job there," Johnson says. "We've got to create some pressure, get some guys coming." It would help if athletically gifted senior KeShun Freeman, who has been a consistent contributor, starts

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| WR 2 | Ricky Jeune (Sr.) | 80 | Jalen Camp (So.) |
| WR 83 | Brad Stewart (Jr.) | 84 | Stephen Dolphus (Fr.) |
| LT 53 | Jahaziel Lee (So.) | 67 | Jake Stickler (Jr.) |
| LG 75 | Parker Braun (So.) | 71 | Shamire Devine (Sr.) |
| C 55 | Kenny Cooper (So.) | 59 | Scott Morgan (So.) |
| RG 70 | Will Bryan (Jr.) | 60 | Brad Morgan (So.) |
| RT 50 | Andrew Marshall (Sr.) | | Zach Quinney (Fr.) |
| QB 11 | Matthew Jordan (Jr.) | 16 | TaQuon Marshall (Jr.) |
| AB 22 | Clinton Lynch (Jr.) | 46 | Xavier Gantt (Fr.) |
| AB 28 | J.J. Green (Sr.) | 1 | Qua Searcy (Jr.) |
| BB 26 | Dedrick Mills (So.) | 30 | KirVonte Benson (So.) |

DEFENSE (8)

| | | | |
|--------|----------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| DE 42 | KeShun Freeman (Sr.) | 39 | Jordan Woods (Fr.) |
| DT 54 | Kyle Cerge-Henderson (Jr.) | 97 | Brentavious Glanton (So.) |
| DT 99 | Desmond Branch (Jr.) | 90 | Brandon Adams (So.) |
| DE 93 | Antonio Simmons (Sr.) | 94 | Anree Saint-Amour (Jr.) |
| OLB 9 | Victor Alexander (Jr.) | | Bruce Jordan-Swilling (Fr.) |
| MLB 51 | Brant Mitchell (Jr.) | 52 | Terrell Lewis (Sr.) |
| CB 8 | Step Durham (Sr.) | 33 | Jaytlin Askew (Fr.) |
| CB 17 | Lance Austin (Sr.) | 6 | Lamont Simmons (Jr.) |
| NB 20 | Lawrence Austin (Sr.) | 34 | Gentry Bonds (Fr.) |
| SS 14 | Corey Griffin (Sr.) | 10 | Christian Campbell (So.) |
| FS 15 | A.J. Gray (Jr.) | 23 | Jalen Johnson (Jr.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| K | Brenton King (Fr.) | KR 28 | J.J. Green (Sr.) |
| P | Pressley Harvin III (Fr.) | PR 83 | Brad Stewart (Jr.) |

DEFENSIVE BACKS Even without a potent pass rush, the Jackets were solid in the secondary and bring back all five starters, led by twins Lawrence and Lance Austin, who combined for six interceptions last year. Both have produced signature moments: Lawrence generated three turnovers against Virginia Tech, while Lance returned a blocked field goal to beat Florida State in 2015 and picked off Georgia's Jacob Eason late to set up a game-winning touchdown last November. Along with safety Corey Griffin, who led the team with 82 tackles, there's a lot of experience and big-play potential. Johnson is challenging the group to create even more takeaways this season. "Winning the turnover battle is probably the most important thing we can gauge ourselves on," he says.

SPECIALISTS With placekicker Harrison Butker and punter Ryan Rodwell both graduating, Georgia Tech is putting a lot of faith in freshmen. Brenton King is an in-state kicking prospect the Jackets identified at their summer camp, and Pressley Harvin III was one of the highest-rated punters in the 2017 class. If one or both struggle, the Jackets will have to turn to a walk-on. "I feel OK about it," Johnson says. "We have watched them enough (to know) they're very capable."

Scouting the YELLOW JACKETS

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP GEORGIA TECH

"When you play Georgia Tech, you have to be ready for a fistfight. They're just a nasty bunch. ... Offensively, they're trying to use an ability to hurt your defensive linemen, secondary, everybody, with their scheme and the way they block. They really push the edge of the rules. They figure you can't call a high-low block every play, so they'll do it 60 times. That's the first thing you have to fight against, and they have a great plan and you have to just try to stay one step ahead of the plan until the end of the game. ... The system stays the same. They need a guy at quarterback that can make good decisions and is a tough runner and then throw it over the top every once in a while, and they'll have to find that guy with (Justin) Thomas leaving. Their backup last year (Matthew Jordan) was a bigger guy they used in goal-line stuff, but he wasn't as much of an open-field threat, so it'll be interesting to see what direction they go. ... They had a freshman back (Dedrick Mills) that is going to be pretty good, but other than that, their personnel is probably towards the bottom of our league."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 29.4 | 72 |
| DEFENSE | 28.3 | 42 |
| MARGIN | +1.1 | 56 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| OFFENSE | 41.2% | 63 |
| DEFENSE | 45.3% | 115 |
| MARGIN | -4.1% | 97 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 6.5 | 19 |
| DEFENSE | 5.8 | 68 |
| MARGIN | +0.7 | 30 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.7 | 43 |
| DEFENSE | 4.3 | 51 |
| MARGIN | +0.4 | 40 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| PROJECTED | -3.1 | 90 |
| ACTUAL | 4 | 36 |
| MARGIN | +7.1 | 13 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

45.3

The Yellow Jackets allowed a 45.3 percent success rate (115th in FBS), and their 11.9 percent havoc rate (tackles for a loss, forced fumbles, and passes intercepted or broken up divided by total defensive plays) ranked 123rd.

+7.1

Tech's turnover margin should have been about minus-3.1. Instead, it was plus-4 — a swing of plus-7.1. Turnovers are generally worth about five points in field position lost and gained; this good fortune was worth about 35 points.

6-1

Under Paul Johnson, Tech is always trending up or down quickly. The Jackets began Johnson's tenure 19-5, then fell into a 29-27 stretch of mediocrity. But over the last three seasons or so, they have had stretches of 13-3, 4-12, and now 6-1.

2017 GEORGIA TECH ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|----------|-----|----------------|
| 18 Johnson, Lucas | 6-3/200 | Fr. | San Diego, CA |
| 13 Jones, Jay | 6-0/175 | Fr. | McCalla, AL |
| 11 Jordan, Matthew | 6-2/208 | Jr. | Fairford, AL |
| 16 Marshall, TaQuon | 5-10/185 | Jr. | Hamilton, GA |
| 12 Martenson, Chase | 6-2/215 | Jr. | Dunwoody, GA |
| 14 Rew, Mark | 6-1/186 | Fr. | Columbia, SC |
| 4 Swilling, Brady | 6-2/222 | Sr. | Chatsworth, GA |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|------------------|
| 30 Benson, KirVonte | 5-9/206 | So. | Marietta, GA |
| 31 Cottrell, Nathan | 5-11/193 | So. | Knoxville, TN |
| 46 Gantt, Xavier | 5-8/164 | Fr. | Buford, GA |
| 28 Green, J.J. | 5-9/188 | Sr. | Kingsland, GA |
| 36 Jarrett, Omahri | 5-10/174 | So. | Douglasville, GA |
| 22 Lynch, Clinton | 6-0/187 | Jr. | Norcross, GA |
| 26 Mills, Dedrick | 5-10/217 | So. | Waycross, GA |
| 1 Searcy, Qua | 5-11/174 | Jr. | Barnesville, GA |
| 32 Turner, Chris | 6-0/200 | So. | Milton, GA |
| 21 Weimerskirch, Quaide | 6-0/217 | So. | Pace, FL |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 89 Barton, Bennett | 6-1/199 | Sr. | Roswell, GA |
| 85 Bussoletti, Alan | 6-4/197 | Fr. | Buford, GA |
| 80 Camp, Jalen | 6-2/213 | So. | Cumming, GA |
| 84 Dolphus, Stephen | 6-5/197 | Fr. | Macon, GA |
| 86 Hawkins-Anderson, Jair | 6-1/186 | Fr. | Suwanee, GA |
| 2 Jeune, Ricky | 6-3/212 | Sr. | Spring Valley, NY |
| 81 Messick, Antonio | 6-3/200 | Sr. | Fayetteville, GA |
| 87 Spear, Quentin | 6-3/191 | Fr. | Atlanta, GA |
| 83 Stewart, Brad | 6-1/197 | Jr. | Savannah, GA |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|---------|-----|-----------------|
| 76 Beard, Davis | 6-4/267 | So. | Louisville, KY |
| 75 Braun, Parker | 6-3/280 | So. | Hallsville, TX |
| 70 Bryan, Will | 6-4/281 | Jr. | Lavonia, GA |
| 55 Cooper, Kenny | 6-3/307 | So. | Calhoun, GA |
| 71 Devine, Shamire | 6-7/370 | Sr. | Atlanta, GA |
| 64 Hunt, Cheyenne | 6-0/250 | Jr. | Springfield, GA |
| 62 Ivemeyer, Bailey | 6-1/270 | So. | Snellville, GA |
| 63 Lagod, Chet | 6-0/259 | Fr. | Marietta, GA |
| 53 Lee, Jahaziel | 6-2/267 | So. | Ponchatoula, LA |
| 50 Marshall, Andrew | 6-4/282 | Sr. | Cumming, GA |
| 60 Morgan, Brad | 6-4/282 | So. | Woodstock, GA |
| 59 Morgan, Scott | 6-4/283 | So. | Woodstock, GA |
| 77 Pruitt, Matt | 6-3/291 | So. | Gainesville, GA |
| 78 Smith, Trey | 6-4/270 | Jr. | Marietta, GA |
| 67 Stickler, Jake | 6-5/291 | Jr. | Bradenton, FL |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 90 Adams, Brandon | 6-2/335 | So. | Brentwood, TN |
| 99 Branch, Desmond | 6-3/270 | Jr. | Rio Rancho, NM |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 72 Brooks, Dijmon | 6-1/270 | Fr. | Sandersville, GA |
| 54 Cerge-Henderson, Kyle | 6-1/295 | Jr. | Tampa, FL |
| 42 Freeman, KeShun | 6-2/250 | Sr. | LaGrange, GA |
| 97 Glanton, Brentavious | 6-3/276 | So. | Albany, GA |
| 96 Martin, Chris | 6-1/271 | Fr. | Loganville, GA |
| 95 Merriweather, Tyler | 6-3/235 | Jr. | Demopolis, AL |
| 94 Saint-Amour, Anree | 6-3/247 | Jr. | Suwanee, GA |
| 93 Simmons, Antonio | 6-3/235 | Sr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 73 Vernon, Tyler | 6-3/231 | Fr. | Hoschton, GA |
| 74 White, Josh | 6-4/225 | Fr. | Marietta, GA |
| 69 Williams, Nick | 6-2/270 | So. | Johns Creek, GA |
| 39 Woods, Jordan | 6-4/262 | Fr. | Citra, FL |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|----------|-----|------------------|
| 9 Alexander, Victor | 5-10/235 | Jr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 49 Brashear, Jakob | 6-0/221 | Fr. | Dacula, GA |
| 43 Cooksey, Tyler | 6-2/224 | So. | Suwanee, GA |
| 32 Curry, David | 6-2/217 | So. | Buford, GA |
| 53 Dandaneau, Chris | 6-3/210 | So. | Jesup, GA |
| 25 Jackson, Tre | 5-10/222 | Jr. | Valdosta, GA |
| 52 Lewis, Terrell | 6-2/217 | Sr. | Ocoee, FL |
| 50 Macrina, Joseph | 6-0/236 | Fr. | Suwanee, GA |
| 66 Mallard, Antonio | 6-1/235 | Sr. | Ellenwood, GA |
| 18 Matthews, Zach | 6-2/187 | Jr. | Suwanee, GA |
| 51 Mitchell, Brant | 6-2/236 | Jr. | Knoxville, TN |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|------------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 33 Askew, Jaytlin | 5-11/187 | Fr. | Douglasville, GA |
| 17 Austin, Lance | 5-10/183 | Sr. | Barnesville, GA |
| 20 Austin, Lawrence | 5-9/185 | Sr. | Barnesville, GA |
| 34 Bonds, Gentry | 6-2/192 | Fr. | Murfreesboro, TN |
| 10 Campbell, Christian | 6-2/205 | So. | Ponchatoula, LA |
| 35 Cole, Jarett | 5-10/192 | Fr. | Norcross, GA |
| 22 Davis, Melvin | 6-0/195 | Jr. | Madison, GA |
| 8 Durham, Step | 5-11/194 | Sr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 15 Gray, A.J. | 6-1/215 | Jr. | Sandersville, GA |
| 14 Griffin, Corey | 6-2/195 | Sr. | Tyrone, GA |
| 23 Johnson, Jalen | 6-3/210 | Jr. | Oneonta, AL |
| 44 Kagawa, Shaun | 5-11/193 | Sr. | Hilo, HI |
| 38 Kerr, Ajani | 6-0/181 | Fr. | Powder Springs, GA |
| 29 Selemba, Josh | 6-3/183 | Jr. | Roswell, GA |
| 6 Simmons, Lamont | 6-2/202 | Jr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 24 Vickers, Bryce | 6-0/192 | Fr. | Nashville, TN |

| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|------------------|
| 82 Aasen, Grant (P) | 6-2/207 | Sr. | Fayetteville, GA |
| 80 Davis, Shawn (K) | 6-2/205 | So. | McDonough, GA |
| 57 Patelles, Lucas (LS) | 5-8/211 | Fr. | Fayetteville, GA |
| 47 Underwood, Shea (K) | 5-10/157 | Fr. | Young Harris, GA |
| 61 Wilson, Casey (LS) | 6-2/215 | Jr. | Tucker, GA |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 4-4 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|----------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | vs. Boston College # | W | 17-14 |
| Sept. 10 | Mercer | W | 35-10 |
| Sept. 17 | Vanderbilt | W | 38-7 |
| Sept. 22 | Clemson | L | 7-26 |
| Oct. 1 | Miami | L | 21-35 |
| Oct. 8 | at Pittsburgh | L | 34-37 |
| Oct. 15 | Georgia Southern | W | 35-24 |
| Oct. 29 | Duke | W | 38-35 |
| Nov. 5 | at North Carolina | L | 20-48 |
| Nov. 12 | at Virginia Tech | W | 30-20 |
| Nov. 19 | Virginia | W | 31-17 |
| Nov. 26 | at Georgia | W | 28-27 |
| Dec. 31 | vs. Kentucky % | W | 33-18 |

#Dublin, Ireland %TaxSlayer Bowl



RICKY JEUNE

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | COMP | YDS | TD | INT |
|-----------------|-----|------|-------|----|-----|
| Justin Thomas | 148 | 79 | 1,559 | 8 | 2 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Dedrick Mills | 152 | 771 | 5.1 | 12 | |
| Marcus Marshall | 96 | 624 | 6.5 | 4 | |
| Justin Thomas | 137 | 604 | 4.4 | 6 | |
| Clinton Lynch | 37 | 415 | 11.2 | 2 | |
| Qua Searcy | 46 | 273 | 5.9 | 2 | |
| Matthew Jordan | 65 | 243 | 3.7 | 6 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Ricky Jeune | 25 | 427 | 17.1 | 1 | |
| Brad Stewart | 19 | 382 | 20.1 | 0 | |
| Clinton Lynch | 16 | 490 | 30.6 | 6 | |

KICKING: Harrison Butler, 15-17 FGs, 46-46 XPs, 91 points

TACKLES: Corey Griffin, 82; P.J. Davis, 76

SACKS: Patrick Gamble, 7.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Lance Austin, 3; Lawrence Austin, 3

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 28.2 ppg | 8 | 70 |
| Rushing | 258.1 ypg | 1 | 9 |
| Passing | 129.2 ypg | 14 | 124 |
| Total | 387.2 ypg | 11 | 85 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 24.5 ppg | 7 | 39 |
| Rushing | 172.2 ypg | 10 | 64 |
| Passing | 229.4 ypg | 9 | 68 |
| Total | 401.6 ypg | 9 | 59 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| +4 | +0.31 | 4 | 38 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----------|----------------------|
| Cortez Alston | DL | 6-3/247 | Atlanta, GA |
| Jaytlin Askew | DB | 5-11/187 | Douglasville, GA |
| Gentry Bonds | DB | 6-2/192 | Murfreesboro, TN |
| Tariq Carpenter | DB | 6-2/188 | Ludowici, GA |
| Charlie Clark | OL | 6-4/286 | Atlanta, GA |
| Kelton Dawson | DL | 6-3/242 | Stockbridge, GA |
| Connor Hansen | OL | 6-2/325 | Tallahassee, FL |
| Pressley Harvin III | P | 6-0/240 | Alcolu, SC |
| Jaquan Henderson | LB | 6-1/197 | Covington, GA |
| Jerry Howard | RB | 6-0/215 | Rock Hill, SC |
| Bruce Jordan-Swilling | LB | 6-1/209 | New Orleans, LA |
| Brenton King | K | 6-0/167 | Auburn, GA |
| MIKEY MINIHAN | OL | 6-3/275 | Honolulu, HI |
| Kaleb Oliver | DB | 6-4/198 | Murfreesboro, TN |
| Tobias Oliver | QB | 6-2/175 | Warner Robins, GA |
| Antwan Owens | DL | 6-4/270 | Tallahassee, FL |
| Jordan Ponchez-Mason | RB | 6-1/205 | Gallatin, TN |
| Zach Quinney | OL | 6-6/265 | Savannah, GA |
| T.D. Roof | LB | 5-11/205 | Buford, GA |
| Adonias Sanders | WR | 6-1/185 | North Charleston, SC |
| Avery Showell | DB | 6-1/192 | Cartersville, GA |
| Tre Swilling | DB | 6-0/185 | New Orleans, LA |
| Boe Tufele | OL | 6-3/290 | Harbor City, CA |
| Dameon Williams | DB | 5-10/175 | Norcross, GA |

Georgia Tech wasn't planning to take a large class in 2017, but with eight players transferring after last season, the coaching staff moved quickly to fill those scholarships with younger talent. The class ended up heavy on defense, including seven defensive backs as the Yellow Jackets are preparing for four seniors to depart their secondary following this season. Among that group, Jaytlin Askew and Gentry Bonds could have a leg up as early enrollees, while Bruce Jordan-Swilling could be needed right away to bolster a depleted linebacking corps. Georgia Tech also landed three-star linebacker T.D. Roof, the son of defensive coordinator Ted Roof. Tobias Oliver, who won a Georgia state title at Northside (Warner Robins) as a sophomore, could be a factor at quarterback down the road. The Yellow Jackets used scholarships on a kicker (Brenton King) and punter (Pressley Harvin III) in this class and will expect them to start and play well right out of the gate.



MIAMI HURRICANES

National Forecast: 23 /// ACC Coastal Prediction: 1

In Mark Richt's debut, Miami posted its first bowl game victory since 2006 and finished with nine wins and the No. 20 spot in the final AP poll. If the second act includes a win over Florida State and a berth in the ACC title game, UM fans will be toasting their good fortune.

Richt, the former Miami quarterback, FSU assistant and 15-year Georgia head coach, is more than comfortable entering his second year at his alma mater. He should be: His defense will likely be one of the ACC's best, with a big, fast front seven that could mask any deficiencies in a rebuilding secondary. And there are enough playmakers on offense to offset the loss of some NFL-bound talent. His coaching staff returns intact, and his recruiting class was top-notch.

The major question: Who's playing quarterback? Richt plans to make that a late decision, stretching his evaluation period until the final week of fall practice. There are no guarantees that whoever wins the job will keep the job, either. UM has the most important game of the regular season — at Florida State — in Week 3, and the QB1 had better be on-point. With so much returning, solid quarterback play could make this a season to remember.

QUARTERBACKS Hurricanes fans who complained about Brad Kaaya's lack of mobility in the pocket might forget those issues this fall. Kaaya was Miami's all-time leading passer for a reason. The race to replace him may not be over until midseason, as Richt's top quarterback recruit, N'Kosi Perry, arrives in the summer and is considered a better prospect than anyone currently on campus. He may not start the opener, but don't be surprised to see him play this fall. Of four returning QBs, the only one with game experience is junior Malik Rosier, who started a game in relief of the injured Kaaya in 2015 but hasn't proven himself to be an accurate deliveryman. Jack Allison, UM's only quarterback recruit in 2016, has size (6'5") and a big arm, but Richt was disappointed with how he didn't emerge as a starter-in-waiting last year. True freshman Cade Weldon is a heady passer who can run a little. Two sophomores, Evan Shirreffs and walk-on Vincent Testaverde Jr. — yes, Vinny's kid — are long shots.

RUNNING BACKS Mark Walton is as good as they come, but he must remain healthy for Miami's offense to be productive. He felt fantastic in 2016, rushing for 1,117 yards and 14 touchdowns. He did that while taking 48 percent (209) of the Hurricanes' 435 carries. That total may increase this fall, as the junior is far and away the most proven option in UM's backfield. "We're dangerously thin at the position," Richt noted in the spring, looking at a rotation that includes sophomore Travis Homer (seven carries last season), freshman Robert Burns and junior Trayone Gray, who sat out 2016 with an ACL tear. Joe Yearby, a 1,000-yard rusher turned backup, declared early for the NFL, and another experienced ball carrier, Gus Edwards, transferred. Walton is a "machine," Richt says, but if he breaks down, the Hurricanes could be in trouble.

RECEIVERS Soon after arriving at his alma mater, Richt observed that his receiver group had no one with elite speed. That was before Ahmmon Richards emerged as Miami's best wideout, the leading freshman receiver in the country (934 yards) and the most productive freshman pass catcher in program history. Richt hopes Richards, who broke Michael Irvin's 31-year-old record for receiving yards by a first-year Hurricane, will keep defenders rubbernecking. He'll also hope that others fill the void left by the NFL-bound Stacy Coley and tight end David Njoku. UM needs senior slot man Braxton Berrios, tight end Chris Herndon and 6'5" sophomore Lawrence Cager (who missed 2016 with an ACL tear) to take the pressure off Richards.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Miami's O-line has been a weak spot in the last three seasons, but there's reason to believe it will be at least ACC-average this year. Danny Isidora, a three-year mainstay at right guard, graduated, but senior Kc McDermott is ready to step into his place. Fellow seniors Trevor Darling (left guard) and Nick Linder (center) should settle in. The questions are on the edges, where junior Tyree St. Louis looks to move from right to left tackle, where he'll compete with LSU transfer George Brown. The right side could be taken over by mammoth true freshman Navaughn Donaldson (6'6", 350), who moves remarkably well for his size. Senior Sunny Odogwu could take that spot after returning from a leg injury that sidelined him in the spring. The spots may not be decided until well into camp, but Miami has more talent and depth here than in recent seasons, so that's a good start.

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Sept. 2 | Bethune-Cookman |
| Sept. 9 | at Arkansas State |
| Sept. 16 | at Florida State |
| Sept. 23 | Toledo |
| Sept. 29 | at Duke |
| Oct. 12 | Georgia Tech |
| Oct. 21 | Syracuse |
| Oct. 28 | at North Carolina |
| Nov. 4 | Virginia Tech |
| Nov. 11 | Notre Dame |
| Nov. 18 | Virginia |
| Nov. 24 | at Pittsburgh |

KEY HURRICANES

MARK WALTON, RB No returning ACC running back rushed for more yards (1,117), had more total yards (1,357) or scored more touchdowns (15).

AHMMON RICHARDS, WR Led the nation in receiving yards by a freshman with a total (934) that broke Michael Irvin's 31-year old UM freshman record.

CHAD THOMAS, DE Senior leader of a defensive line that helped UM finish fifth nationally in tackles for a loss per game (8.31).

KEY LOSSES

BRAD KAAYA, QB Three-year starter left for the NFL after setting UM records in passing yards (9,968), attempts (1,188) and completions (720).

DAVID NJOKU, TE High NFL Draft pick and matchup nightmare led ACC tight ends in receiving yards (698) and touchdowns (eight).

CORN ELDER, CB Best of four graduating senior defensive backs; shut down many top receivers UM faced in 2016.

RIISING STAR

Before last season, Miami coaches lamented a lack of speed at wide receiver, and the graduation of Stacy Coley left them in need again. Enter **Jeff Thomas**, a field-stretching burner who won MVP honors at the Under Armour All-America Game.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 9-4, 5-3 ACC

Despite losing quarterback Brad Kaaya, the Hurricanes are the pick to win the Coastal Division. Mark Richt's impact on the offense was evident in 2016, as this unit averaged 34.3 points per game. The battle to replace Kaaya is likely to extend into the season, but Richt has a strong track record of developing quarterbacks. And with a new QB, the offense can lean on a solid line and All-ACC playmakers in receiver Ahmmon Richards and running back Mark Walton. The defense also showed marked improvement last season and is poised to rank among the ACC's best with seven returning starters. A tight race is expected in the Coastal, but home games against Virginia Tech and Georgia Tech should propel the Hurricanes to their first division title.

Postseason: Citrus Bowl vs. Georgia



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

MUST-DOS IN YEAR 2 UM has not played for the ACC Championship Game since joining the league in 2004, but even more embarrassing, it hasn't upended rival Florida State since 2009. Think of it this way: Incoming freshmen were in fifth grade when the Canes last beat the Noles.

FACILITY BOOST Forever lagging behind its competitors in the facilities race, Miami is catching up. The final phase of a \$550 million renovation to Hard Rock Stadium will be completed by the fall, paid for by the NFL's Miami Dolphins. The school is also making the most of its densely packed footprint in the suburb of Coral Gables. The Carol Soffer Indoor Practice Facility, an 81,000-square-foot facility costing \$34 million, will be built over UM's existing practice fields and is slated for an August 2018 opening.

DRASTICALLY DIFFERENT D A Miami native who grew up watching the great Hurricanes teams of the 1980s, Manny Diaz wanted his UM defense to play like the teams he saw in the Orange Bowl. Consider that goal achieved. In Year 1 under the new defensive coordinator, Miami rose from 106th in tackles for a loss to fifth, 115th in yards per rush allowed to 17th, 86th in yards per play allowed to ninth and 77th in points allowed to 12th.

SIDELINE SWAGGER One of the casualties of Miami's protracted NCAA turmoil, which officially ended last October, was the removal of former players from the sidelines during games. Before the Nevin Shapiro mess, UM would allow its former stars to cheer on the current players from field level. It backed away from that practice while under a three-year probation. This fall, Mark Richt and AD Blake James have said they'll consider allowing alums to return to the sidelines, which could give the Canes an extra edge.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Mark Richt

RECORD AT SCHOOL

9-4 (1 year)

CAREER RECORD

154-55 (16 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Thomas Brown

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Manny Diaz

LOCATION

Coral Gables, FL

STADIUM

Hard Rock Stadium (65,326)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



RB **MARK WALTON**



DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Despite dismissing a player (Al-Quadin Muhammad) considered to be among the ACC's best and dealing with injuries throughout the year, the 2016 Hurricanes defensive line was the program's best in a half-decade, and every major contributor returns. Position coach Craig Kuligowski, long hailed as a top producer of NFL talent, has a wealth of talent and experience and added excellent recruits locally and nationally. Expect bigger things from sophomore end Joe Jackson, who stepped in for Muhammad and recorded 11.5 tackles for a loss and 8.5 sacks, the most by a Cane since 2006. He and senior Chad Thomas (11.0 TFLs) form a nasty duo off the edge. Starting tackles Kendrick Norton and R.J. McIntosh — both juniors — have big bodies and nimble feet. Workmanlike upperclassmen Trent Harris and Demetrius Jackson should improve with another year under Kuligowski, and incoming freshman D.J. Johnson may be too good to keep on the sideline. Johnson had more scholarship offers — 100 — than any player in the country.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

| | | | |
|-------|--------------------------|----|------------------------|
| WR 18 | Lawrence Cager (So.) | 80 | Dayall Harris (Jr.) |
| WR 8 | Braxton Berrios (Sr.) | | Jeff Thomas (Fr.) |
| WR 82 | Ahmon Richards (So.) | 84 | Dionte Mullins (So.) |
| LT 78 | Tyree St. Louis (Jr.) | 70 | George Brown Jr. (So.) |
| LG 73 | Trevor Darling (Sr.) | 74 | Tyler Gauthier (Jr.) |
| C 68 | Nick Linder (Sr.) | | Corey Gaynor (Fr.) |
| RG 52 | Kc McDermott (Sr.) | 77 | Jahair Jones (Jr.) |
| RT 55 | Navaughn Donaldson (Fr.) | 66 | Sunny Odogwu (Sr.) |
| TE 23 | Chris Herndon IV (Sr.) | 87 | Michael Irvin II (So.) |
| QB 12 | Malik Rosier (Jr.) | 11 | Jack Allison (Fr.) |
| RB 1 | Mark Walton (Jr.) | 24 | Travis Homer (So.) |

DEFENSE (7)

| | | | |
|--------|------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| DE 9 | Chad Thomas (Sr.) | 31 | Demetrius Jackson (Jr.) |
| DT 7 | Kendrick Norton (Jr.) | 91 | Gerald Willis (Jr.) |
| DT 80 | R.J. McIntosh (Jr.) | 95 | Anthony Moten (Sr.) |
| DE 99 | Joe Jackson (So.) | 33 | Trent Harris (Sr.) |
| SLB 53 | Zach McCloud (So.) | 34 | Charles Perry (Jr.) |
| MLB 55 | Shaqu Quarterman (So.) | 57 | Mike Smith (Jr.) |
| WLB 56 | Michael Pinckney (So.) | 58 | Darrion Owens (Jr.) |
| CB | Dee Delaney (Sr.) | | Trajan Bandy (Fr.) |
| CB | Jhavornte Dean (Jr.) | 12 | Malek Young (So.) |
| S 4 | Jaquan Johnson (Jr.) | 20 | Robert Knowles (So.) |
| S 30 | Romeo Finley (So.) | 5 | Amari Carter (Fr.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|-----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| K 15 | Michael Badgley (Sr.) | KR | Mike Harley (Fr.) |
| P | Zach Feagles (Fr.) | PR | Braxton Berrios (Sr.) |

Delaney, a two-time FCS All-American from The Citadel, transferred in. Immediately eligible, he could start opposite junior college addition Jhavornte Dean, with talented freshman Trajan Bandy in line for a nickel role. Junior safety Jaquan Johnson, by far UM's most experienced returner in the secondary, takes on a leadership role, though the safeties behind him are unproven. In the spring, coordinator Manny Diaz tried several cornerbacks at safety to fill holes. Miami should have speed and savvy, but things are brand new here. Miami has an excellent front seven that could take pressure off the rebuilding secondary, and that idea will be put to the test in Week 3 at Florida State.

SPECIALISTS For all the running backs, receivers, tight ends and defensive backs Miami has sent to the NFL in recent seasons, "The U" can rightfully call itself "Punter U" as well. As three-year starter Justin Vogel heads to the pros, a UM legacy, freshman Zach Feagles, is expected to win the starting job. The Canes have had stability at kicker with senior Michael Badgley, and the upgrade at wide receiver and defensive back means they'll have quality return options in addition to Berrios, who handled punts last year.

Scouting the HURRICANES

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP MIAMI

"They lost their quarterback, their best receiver and a big-time tailback, but they're still probably the most talented team in the division. They didn't expect (Brad) Kaaya to go to the draft, and he kind of blindsided them so, ok, who's up next? It'll be a little bit of a wait-and-see thing with the quarterback position. ... Outside of quarterback, they bring back more experience than anybody in the division, so that will be the key. They played a bunch of freshmen last year all over the field, so they've got some guys who can step in, and they're recruiting well. ... Toward the end of the season they were playing good fundamental football and it really showed in the bowl game. I think it will help those guys to be in the second year of the system. ... Manny (Diaz) does a nice job defensively, but he's a total gimmick guy. He wants to try to prove to people that he's brilliant. He's got some really nice pieces, but they're too gimmicky for my taste. ... They have good young pass rushers. That's probably the strongest part of their team. The (Demetrius) Jackson kid is special. (Shaquille) Quarterman was really good for a freshman."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 31.1 | 35 |
| DEFENSE | 27.8 | 30 |
| MARGIN | +3.3 | 25 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| OFFENSE | 40.9% | 66 |
| DEFENSE | 35.6% | 23 |
| MARGIN | +5.3% | 32 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 6.4 | 25 |
| DEFENSE | 4.8 | 9 |
| MARGIN | +1.6 | 8 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.6 | 53 |
| DEFENSE | 3.7 | 11 |
| MARGIN | +0.9 | 13 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| PROJECTED | 10.4 | 4 |
| ACTUAL | 9 | 14 |
| MARGIN | -1.4 | 77 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness--yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

+1.6 Miami averaged 6.4 yards per play and allowed 4.8. That plus-1.6 margin ranked eighth in the country. But an 0-3 record in one-possession finishes prevented a dramatic first-year statement for Mark Richt.

3.7 The Hurricanes' defense was good at preventing scoring opportunities but got better after allowing them. They allowed just 3.7 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the opponent's 40), 11th in the country and best in the ACC.

18.8 UM ranked 101st in opportunity rate (percentage of carries gaining at least five yards), 107th in power success rate (short-yardage rushing), and 117th in stuff rate (run stops at or behind the line). It caught up to them in losses, when they averaged 18.8 points.

2017 MIAMI ROSTER

QUARTERBACKS

| | | | | |
|----|---------------------|---------|-----|-----------------|
| 11 | Allison, Jack | 6-5/200 | Fr. | Parrish, FL |
| 19 | Beirne, Tucker | 6-2/245 | So. | Miami, FL |
| 20 | DiBiase, Augie | 6-1/208 | Fr. | Ponte Vedra, FL |
| 12 | Rosier, Malik | 6-1/216 | Jr. | Mobile, AL |
| 16 | Shirreffs, Evan | 6-5/216 | So. | Jefferson, GA |
| 14 | Testaverde, Vincent | 6-2/205 | Jr. | Tampa, FL |
| 17 | Weldon, Cade | 6-3/212 | Fr. | Tampa, FL |

RUNNING BACKS

| | | | | |
|----|------------------|----------|-----|---------------------|
| 28 | Atkins, Crispian | 5-9/185 | Jr. | Plant City, FL |
| 22 | Burns, Robert | 5-11/215 | Fr. | Miami, FL |
| 43 | Callan, TJ | 6-1/210 | Jr. | Doral, FL |
| 37 | Castillo, Cesar | 6-2/230 | Jr. | Jupiter, FL |
| 38 | Dominguez, Danny | 5-10/218 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 32 | Gray, Trayone | 6-2/235 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 24 | Homer, Travis | 5-11/195 | So. | West Palm Beach, FL |
| 45 | Pope, Jack | 6-2/248 | Fr. | Geneseo, NY |
| 1 | Walton, Mark | 5-9/205 | Jr. | Miami, FL |

RECEIVERS

| | | | | |
|----|---------------------|----------|-----|------------------|
| 29 | Allen, Chad | 5-10/175 | So. | Menlo Park, CA |
| 8 | Berrios, Braxton | 5-9/186 | Sr. | Raleigh, NC |
| 18 | Cager, Lawrence | 6-5/218 | So. | Towson, MD |
| 46 | Carney, O'Juan | 5-10/186 | So. | Miramar, FL |
| 80 | Harris, Dayall | 6-3/195 | Jr. | Jackson, MS |
| 81 | Langham, Darrell | 6-4/220 | Jr. | Lantana, FL |
| 34 | Lugo-Fagundo, Elias | 6-0/190 | Fr. | Cabo Rojo, PR |
| 31 | Mayweather, Malik | 6-0/186 | Jr. | Olive Branch, MS |
| 84 | Mullins, Dionte | 5-10/200 | So. | Homestead, FL |
| 82 | Richards, Ahmmon | 6-1/190 | So. | Wellington, FL |
| 47 | Romp, Jake | 5-8/168 | Jr. | Tampa, FL |

TIGHT ENDS

| | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 86 | Curry, Malik | 6-3/230 | So. | Albuquerque, NM |
| 85 | Haskins, Jovani | 6-4/240 | Fr. | Bergenfield, NJ |
| 23 | Herndon IV, Christopher | 6-4/252 | Sr. | Norcross, GA |
| 87 | Irvin II, Michael | 6-3/248 | So. | Ft. Lauderdale, FL |
| 88 | Polendey, Brian | 6-6/230 | Fr. | Denton, TX |

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

| | | | | |
|----|---------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 70 | Brown Jr., George | 6-7/300 | So. | Cincinnati, OH |
| 73 | Darling, Trevor | 6-4/300 | Sr. | Miami, FL |
| 55 | Donaldson, Navaughn | 6-6/350 | Fr. | Miami, FL |
| 67 | Dykstra, Zach | 6-6/300 | Fr. | Spirit Lake, IA |
| 74 | Gauthier, Tyler | 6-5/305 | Jr. | Venice, FL |
| 59 | Goldberg, Justin | 6-2/205 | Jr. | Weston, FL |
| 76 | Johnson, Tre | 6-7/305 | Fr. | Orlando, FL |
| 77 | Jones, Jahair | 6-4/316 | Jr. | Brooklyn, NY |
| 68 | Linder, Nick | 6-3/298 | Sr. | Ft. Lauderdale, FL |
| 62 | Mahoney, Hayden | 6-5/295 | So. | Malvern, PA |
| 52 | McDermott, Kc | 6-7/300 | Sr. | Wellington, FL |
| 79 | Milo, Bar | 6-6/298 | So. | West Hills, CA |
| 66 | Odogwu, Sunny | 6-8/322 | Sr. | Ezeagu, Nigeria |
| 78 | St. Louis, Tyree | 6-5/305 | Jr. | Bradenton, FL |

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

| | | | | |
|----|-------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 93 | Bethel, Pat | 6-3/272 | So. | Vero Beach, FL |
| 94 | Fines, Ryan | 6-2/300 | So. | Bradenton, FL |

| | | | | |
|----|--------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 97 | Garvin, Jonathan | 6-4/235 | Fr. | Lake Worth, FL |
| 33 | Harris, Trent | 6-2/248 | Sr. | Winter Park, FL |
| 31 | Jackson, Demetrius | 6-3/265 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 99 | Jackson, Joe | 6-5/258 | So. | Homestead, FL |
| 79 | Lerman, Zachary | 6-2/296 | Fr. | Virginia Beach, VA |
| 90 | Martin, Tyreic | 6-3/280 | Fr. | Lanett, AL |
| 80 | McIntosh, R.J. | 6-4/293 | Jr. | Ft. Lauderdale, FL |
| 95 | Moten, Anthony | 6-4/315 | Sr. | Ft. Lauderdale, FL |
| 7 | Norton, Kendrick | 6-3/312 | Jr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 19 | Patchan, Scott | 6-6/240 | So. | Bradenton, FL |
| 9 | Thomas, Chad | 6-6/275 | Sr. | Miami, FL |
| 91 | Willis, Gerald | 6-4/285 | Jr. | New Orleans, LA |

LINEBACKERS

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------|----------|-----|---------------------|
| 44 | Dunn, Eddie | 5-11/205 | Jr. | Tavernier, FL |
| 52 | Gordinier, Jamie | 6-4/235 | So. | Monmouth Beach, NJ |
| 59 | Hardie, Jared | 5-11/225 | Jr. | Lansdowne, VA |
| 44 | Jennings Jr., Bradley | 6-1/230 | Fr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 53 | McCloud, Zach | 6-2/230 | So. | Lantana, FL |
| 23 | McCray, Terry | 6-3/238 | Jr. | Pompano Beach, FL |
| 58 | Owens, Darriion | 6-3/240 | Jr. | Orange Park, FL |
| 34 | Perry, Charles | 6-1/230 | Jr. | West Palm Beach, FL |
| 56 | Pinckney, Michael | 6-1/228 | So. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 55 | Quarterman, Shaquille | 6-1/240 | So. | Orange Park, FL |
| 57 | Smith, Mike | 6-1/236 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 17 | Steed, Waymon | 5-11/223 | Fr. | Miami, FL |
| 49 | Walker, Shawn | 6-2/217 | So. | Ft. Lauderdale, FL |
| 47 | Washington II, Dewayne | 6-0/240 | Fr. | Raleigh, NC |

DEFENSIVE BACKS

| | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----------|-----|------------------------|
| 5 | Carter, Amari | 6-2/197 | Fr. | Palm Beach Gardens, FL |
| 13 | Dallas, DeeJay | 5-10/200 | Fr. | Brunswick, GA |
| | Delaney, Dee | 6-1/194 | Sr. | Seabrook, SC |
| 46 | Ferguson-McAllister, Daniel | 5-9/180 | So. | Morgantown, WV |
| 30 | Finley, Romeo | 6-1/205 | So. | Fort Walton Beach, FL |
| 21 | Henley, Terrance | 5-11/170 | Jr. | Pompano Beach, FL |
| 28 | Jackson, Michael | 6-1/200 | Jr. | Birmingham, AL |
| 37 | James Jr., Jeff | 6-1/185 | So. | Orlando, FL |
| 4 | Johnson, Jaquan | 5-11/190 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 24 | Johnson, Josh | 5-5/155 | Sr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 20 | Knowles, Robert | 6-1/198 | So. | Miami, FL |
| 27 | Mayes, Ryan | 6-1/190 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 32 | Murphy, Tyler | 5-8/175 | Jr. | Lawrenceville, GA |
| 22 | Redwine, Sheldrick | 6-1/195 | Jr. | Miami, FL |
| 36 | Stavetski, Teddy | 6-3/205 | Jr. | Haddonfield, NJ |
| 12 | Young, Malek | 5-9/180 | So. | Ft. Lauderdale, FL |

SPECIALISTS

| | | | | |
|----|----------------------|----------|-----|----------------|
| 15 | Badgley, Michael (K) | 5-10/178 | Sr. | Summit, NJ |
| 85 | Baeza, Marco (K) | 6-3/210 | Jr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 39 | Butler, Jordan (LS) | 5-9/190 | Jr. | Scottsdale, AZ |
| 98 | Marquez, Diego (P) | 6-1/200 | Sr. | Loma Linda, CA |
| 61 | Munoz, Jacob (LS) | 5-11/200 | So. | Atlanta, GA |
| 43 | Spicer, Jack (P) | 6-3/210 | So. | Estero, FL |
| 57 | York, Sam (LS) | 6-1/198 | Jr. | Marblehead, MA |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 9-4, 5-3 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|----------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | Florida A&M | W | 70-3 |
| Sept. 10 | Florida Atlantic | W | 38-10 |
| Sept. 17 | at Appalachian State | W | 45-10 |
| Oct. 1 | at Georgia Tech | W | 35-21 |
| Oct. 8 | Florida State | L | 19-20 |
| Oct. 15 | North Carolina | L | 13-20 |
| Oct. 20 | at Virginia Tech | L | 16-37 |
| Oct. 29 | at Notre Dame | L | 27-30 |
| Nov. 5 | Pittsburgh | W | 51-28 |
| Nov. 12 | at Virginia | W | 34-14 |
| Nov. 19 | at NC State | W | 27-13 |
| Nov. 26 | Duke | W | 40-21 |
| Dec. 28 | vs. West Virginia # | W | 31-14 |

#Russell Athletic Bowl



SHAQ QUARTERMAN

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|------------|-----|-----|-------|----|-----|
| Brad Kaaya | 421 | 261 | 3,532 | 27 | 7 |

| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD |
|-------------|-----|-------|-----|----|
| Mark Walton | 209 | 1,117 | 5.3 | 14 |
| Joe Yearby | 102 | 608 | 6.0 | 7 |
| Gus Edwards | 59 | 290 | 4.9 | 1 |

| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD |
|---------------------|-----|-----|------|----|
| Stacy Coley | 63 | 754 | 12.0 | 9 |
| Ahmmon Richards | 49 | 934 | 19.1 | 3 |
| David Njoku | 43 | 698 | 16.2 | 8 |
| Christopher Herndon | 28 | 334 | 11.9 | 2 |
| Mark Walton | 27 | 240 | 8.9 | 1 |
| Malcolm Lewis | 17 | 211 | 12.4 | 1 |

KICKING: Michael Badgley, 21-26 FGs, 53-55 XPs, 116 points

TACKLES: Jamal Carter, 85; Shaquille Quarterman, 84

SACKS: Joe Jackson, 8.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Rayshawn Jenkins, 2
Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 34.3 ppg | 6 | 37 |
| Rushing | 151.8 ypg | 9 | 93 |
| Passing | 274.2 ypg | 5 | 27 |
| Total | 425.9 ypg | 8 | 57 |

| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 18.5 ppg | 2 | 12 |
| Rushing | 131.8 ypg | 7 | 26 |
| Passing | 213.8 ypg | 6 | 47 |
| Total | 345.5 ypg | 5 | 20 |

| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|----------|-----|----------|
| +9 | +0.69 | 1 | 14 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----|----------|------------------------|----------------------|----|----------|----------------------|
| Trajan Bandy | DB | 5-9/180 | Miami, FL | Kai-Leon Herbert | OL | 6-5/285 | Plantation, FL |
| Robert Burns | RB | 5-11/215 | Miami, FL | Zalon 'tae Hillery | OL | 6-6/287 | Brunswick, GA |
| Amari Carter | DB | 6-2/188 | Palm Beach Gardens, FL | Bradley Jennings Jr. | LB | 6-2/218 | Jacksonville, FL |
| DeeJay Dallas | ATH | 5-10/191 | Brunswick, GA | D.J. Johnson | DL | 6-5/240 | Sacramento, CA |
| Jhavonte Dean | DB | 6-2/185 | Homestead, FL | Evidence Njoku | WR | 6-6/196 | Cedar Grove, NJ |
| Navaughn Donaldson | OL | 6-6/350 | Miami, FL | N'Kosi Perry | QB | 6-4/185 | Ocala, FL |
| Zach Dykstra | OL | 6-6/290 | Spirit Lake, IA | Brian Polendey | TE | 6-5/230 | Denton, TX |
| Zach Feagles | P | 6-2/210 | Glen Rock, NJ | Derrick Smith | DB | 6-2/200 | Jacksonville, FL |
| Jonathan Ford | DL | 6-5/275 | Fort Lauderdale, FL | Waymon Steed | LB | 6-0/221 | Miami, FL |
| Jonathan Garvin | DL | 6-3/222 | Lake Worth, FL | Jeff Thomas | WR | 5-10/175 | East Saint Louis, IL |
| Corey Gaynor | OL | 6-4/285 | Parkland, FL | Cade Weldon | QB | 6-2/203 | Tampa, FL |
| Mike Harley | WR | 5-9/160 | Fort Lauderdale, FL | De'Andre Wilder | LB | 6-3/202 | Opa Locka, FL |

As expected, Miami's recruiting improved in the second year under Mark Richt. The Canes needed speedy wideouts, and they signed All-America prep stars Jeff Thomas and Mike Harley. Not only that, but Richt signed a quarterback of the future [four-star dual threat N'Kosi Perry, who will compete for the starting job this fall] and players who have "NFL" written all over them in offensive tackle Navaughn Donaldson and defensive end D.J. Johnson. The addition of Donaldson, a 6'6", 350-pound tackle who moves with the speed of a much smaller man, was especially important for a line that has struggled in recent seasons.

MICHAEL PINCKNEY



ZACH MCCLLOUD



SHAQ QUARTERMAN



LINEBACKER



TM

A trio of young backers is upholding a formidable Miami tradition at the position

BY MATT PORTER

The coordinates were constantly shifting, but the lateral boundaries always stretched from one sideline to the other. In Miami's Orange Bowl nearly three decades years ago, Micheal Barrow, Darrin Smith and Jessie Armstead roamed an area they called the Bermuda Triangle.

"We came up with it, because once you went into the three of us, you disappeared," Barrow says. "You got demolished."

On Miami's practice field today, three special young linebackers roam that area where running backs once vanished in a sea of orange and green.

Shaq Quarterman, Michael Pinckney and Zach McCloud were a major reason the Hurricanes' defense went from flimsy to fearsome in 2016, the first season under Mark Richt's coaching staff. Making that all the more remarkable: None of them had previously played a down in college.

No other team in the nation started three newcomers at linebacker, and no other team in the Hurricanes' 90-year history had such inexperience at that spot. But with those three true freshmen patrolling the second level, the Canes jumped from 106th nationally in tackles for a loss to fifth, 115th against the run

to 17th, 86th in yards per play allowed to ninth and 77th in scoring defense to 12th.

They lose four seniors in the secondary, but the Hurricanes expect to have one of the best defenses in the ACC with a stout defensive line and a stalwart second level: Quarterman, the 6'1", 240-pound thumper in the middle; Pinckney (6'1", 228), whose mouth and feet move equally fast on the weak side; and strong-side man McCloud (6'2", 230), perhaps the best athlete of the three.

"I don't think anyone expected us to do the numbers we did, for the defense to flip from one side of the spectrum to the other," says Quarterman, who was named to multiple Freshman All-America teams. "Seeing that made us all realize, we can really do this. We realize we can be among the top [defenses], if we're not already in some people's eyes. With our whole front seven coming back, it's going to be dangerous."

Their coaches were playing with fire last year, putting pups in prominent positions. But the true freshmen earned their starting jobs in the spring, and when UM dismissed senior linebacker Jermaine Grace — arguably its best defensive player — in August for breaking NCAA rules, the training wheels came off.

Quarterman was third among ACC freshmen in tackles (84) and had more tackles for a loss (10.0) than any rookie ACC linebacker since Boston College's Luke Kuechly (13.0) in 2009. He also led the Canes with eight quarterback hurries and three sacks. Pinckney (61 tackles, 7.5 for a loss, 2.5 sacks) and McCloud (37 tackles, 3.5 for a loss, blocked punt) made their share of highlight-reel plays.

Stats aside, these backers have skill, and plenty of that old-school swagger that made "The U" the most hated — and loved — team around.

Quarterman says he wants to be the best No. 55 to ever play at Miami, and he sees his freshman year accolades as a slight: He wants to be an All-American in full. "The fact I have so many doubters, the fact I'm not regarded as the best linebacker right now, that's what drives me," he says. "This year I'm trying to be the best regardless of age."

Like Quarterman, Pinckney hails from the Jacksonville area and grew up a Hurricanes fan. He was enamored with the history and tradition, and the style with which they played. But he didn't kiss any rings when he got to campus.

After he settled in his dorm room last January with Quarterman and Lantana,

Pinckney, Quarterman: Tom DiPace; McCloud: Joe Robbins/Getty Images; Barrow: Miami Athletics; Smith: Athlon Archives; Armstead: Getty Images

Fla., native McCloud, Pinckney went to run at UM's Greentree Practice Fields. The fences there are covered with large images of the 72 All-Americans who wore a Miami uniform. Pinckney focused on one of them: Ray Lewis, the greatest of all Hurricanes linebackers.

He laced up his cleats and sprinted. Up and down the field he went, each time passing a triumphant Lewis in his No. 52 jersey. He would repeat the same mantra: "I'm better than you."

It was both crazy and cocky, he admits. "But I feel like, man, you've got to say things like that, even if you know you're not yet," he says. "You've got to push yourself. ... Somebody you grew up watching, you've got to be like, 'I'm going to be better than you,' and I've got the chance to do it. I've just got to fight to do it."

Those old Miami stars know the feeling. From the first great Hurricanes player, 1960s legend Ted "The Mad Stork" Hendricks, to 1980s standout Winston Moss, from the Bermuda Triangle trio to latter-day stalwarts Jonathan Vilma and Jon Beason, the best linebackers in Miami history say this trio is on track to be just as good as they were.

Barrow, 47, has a unique perspective. Before his current gig coaching the Seattle Seahawks' linebackers, he held the same position at UM. The last two verbal commitments he secured before leaving Coral Gables: Quarterman and Pinckney. Quarterman, in particular, turned heads as soon as he got to Oakleaf High.

"Man, you wanted to check his ID," Barrow says. "You'd think he was a senior. He just kept competing and fighting and trying to kill people out there."

At nearby Raines High, Pinckney told Barrow from the beginning he wanted to be a Cane.

"It was so easy to talk to him because he did all the talking," Barrow says of Pinckney, who chose No. 56 at UM to honor him. "What you see is what you get. He plays with emotion. He doesn't fake it, he doesn't hide it. He is who he is. And he backs up what he says."

Pinckney believes Miami can "dominate. We know the scheme. We've been in it a year. We know the coaches. We're used to the guys. We're pushing for the ACC championship. That's the first goal. Then the national."

McCloud, a Santaluces High graduate who wears No. 53, simply says he's "excited about the challenges to come." Old-timers like Hendricks are excited about watching them.

"They're a very talented bunch," says Hendricks, 69, who won four Super Bowls as a pro and ranked 13th on *Athlon Sports'* list of the greatest NFL linebackers.

"They're only going to get better with more experience. In their junior year, then we'll really be good."

Moss, who was part of the first Hurricanes title team (1983) as a freshman, knows that fearless linebackers are a prerequisite of a championship defense.

"I'm impressed," says Moss, 51, the associate head coach and linebackers coach for the Green Bay Packers. "They remind me of some of the guys we had back in the day, with the toughness, the smarts. When your linebackers are the lions of your team, you're in good shape. The Hurricanes look like they're in great shape, because it looks like they've got some young lions."

Armstead, 46 and a consultant for the New York Giants, has high praise: "They can be one of the best linebacker groups ever to come through UM," he says.

Vilma, who grew up watching Armstead and Lewis and learned his craft

from Randy Shannon (his defensive coordinator), Nate Webster and Dan Morgan, ended a standout NFL career in 2015 and became an ESPN analyst. In that role, he has plenty to say.

"If they continue to grow, we're only going to have them for three years instead of four," says Vilma, 35. "I think that Pinckney is a little further ahead of Quarterman and McCloud because he understands angles right now. He's very good in space. He's a violent tackler. I like all three of them, but he's the one that really stands out, being a true freshman and being able to play in space the way he did."

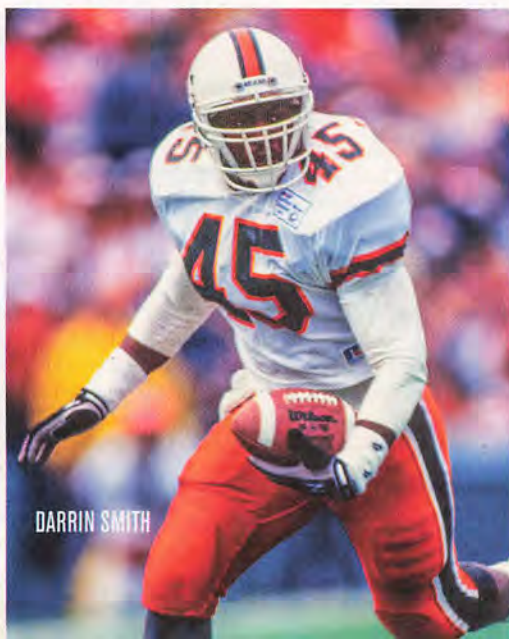
"Quarterman, he's big. I hesitate to use the word 'freakish,' but for his size and being able to move the way laterally like he does ... his hips are very fluid, and he can also play in space. He's a big linebacker, but he's not just relegated to first and second down. He can play in space as well. That ability right there, along with two more years of getting faster and stronger and more explosive, the sky's the limit for him."

McCloud, he says, is even more athletic, but "Quarterman and Pinckney are just a little more aggressive. ... Just go get the ball. Don't worry about the plays. You'll figure out the plays as you get along in the season, and coach will coach you up."

That's a reminder that by the opening kickoff, all three will be 19 years old. They have much to learn, but their potential is tantalizing.

"They're finding out greatness comes from being consistently good," says Miami defensive coordinator Manny Diaz. "It's not just the spectacular. It's being where you're supposed to be down after down. The good thing about all three, we know they'll hit, we know they'll strike."

Just like a Miami linebacker should.





NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS

National Forecast: 42 /// ACC Coastal Prediction: 5

A year ago, North Carolina faced something in the preseason that it had craved for years: championship expectations. The Tar Heels were on the rise after winning their first ACC Coastal Division title in 2015, and they had bigger and better goals for their encore performance. But they slipped to 8-5, victims of injury and inconsistency in what was supposed to be a special season. Now that many of the key players from the last two years have departed, so have the lofty expectations. No one outside the Kenan Football Center is expecting any kind of championship in 2017.

"It's pretty cool," tight end Brandon Fritts says. "A lot of people are really underestimating us, kind of writing us off early just because we're not returning a lot of guys."

To say that the Tar Heels have holes to fill is like saying that they played in the rain against Virginia Tech last season during Hurricane Matthew. While true, it doesn't quite tell the story.

The star quarterback? Gone, as are the top three running backs, best three wide receivers, and three of the top five offensive linemen. UNC returns one percent of its rushing yards, 1.7 percent of its passing yards, 29.5 percent of its receiving yards and 14.3 percent of its points from a year ago. Oh, and the defense has a new coordinator and three new assistants for Larry Fedora's sixth season. "We're young at a lot of positions," Fedora says. "They'll grow up quick."

They'll need to. And unlike in recent years, the defense will need to be as good as — or better than — the offense. With Gene Chizik resigning for family reasons, John Papuchis has moved from linebackers coach to defensive coordinator. The basic scheme and terminology are remaining the same for a unit with six returning starters, allowing the Tar Heels to build on the improvement they made in two years under Chizik.

While the offense faces many questions, confidence apparently won't be an issue.

"We can win with what we've got," wide receiver Austin Proehl says. "We've got a bunch of young guys who want to show that we didn't lose anybody, that we're going to be better than we were last year and the year before that. That's the best part about it."

QUARTERBACKS UNC's coaches knew heading into last year that Mitch Trubisky was good, but they had no idea that he'd be off to the NFL after just one season as a starter. Replacing him won't be easy. Underclassmen Nathan Elliott, Chazz Surratt and Logan Byrd began a three-way battle in the spring that remains undecided, and LSU graduate transfer Brandon Harris will also join the mix. Harris is the only player in the group with starting experience — he started 12 games as a sophomore and two more last season before being benched — and he brings dual-threat ability that could shine in UNC's fast-paced spread attack. He will be given every opportunity during training camp to win the job. Elliott has the most familiarity with the offense, and he outperformed Surratt and Byrd in the spring game.

RUNNING BACKS Elijah Hood and T.J. Logan rushed for a combined 4,745 yards (on 5.7 yards per carry) and 48 touchdowns during their respective careers. Their departure leaves sophomore Jordon Brown as the lone tailback on the roster who had a carry for UNC in 2016. Brown missed most of the spring with a knee injury, creating plenty of reps for early enrollee Michael Carter. Carter has a nice pedigree as the *USA TODAY* Offensive Player of the Year in the state of Florida, and he will have a chance to win the starting job. Graduate transfer Stanton Truitt from Auburn has a versatile skill set that should allow him to contribute as a rusher and receiver.

RECEIVERS Casual UNC fans likely won't recognize many of the players in this group. Only Proehl, the son of 17-year NFL veteran Ricky Proehl, has more than 275 career receiving yards. He can play outside or in the slot and made 43 catches for 597 yards a year ago. Senior Jordan Cunningham should earn a bigger role after catching six passes in 2016. Thomas Jackson emerged as a reliable possession receiver in limited duty last season, and Anthony Ratliff-Williams has good speed. Juval Mollette has the size to win some battles on contested throws down the sideline. The Tar Heels have a nice 1-2 punch at tight end in Fritts, who was hampered by an ankle injury for most of last season, and Carl Tucker.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN UNC has had continuity up front in the past couple of years, but offensive coordinator and line coach Chris Kapilovic has some meshing to do this season

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|------------------|
| Sept. 2 | California |
| Sept. 9 | Louisville |
| Sept. 16 | at Old Dominion |
| Sept. 23 | Duke |
| Sept. 30 | at Georgia Tech |
| Oct. 7 | Notre Dame |
| Oct. 14 | Virginia |
| Oct. 21 | at Virginia Tech |
| Oct. 28 | Miami |
| Nov. 9 | at Pittsburgh |
| Nov. 18 | Western Carolina |
| Nov. 25 | at NC State |

KEY TAR HEELS

BENTLEY SPAIN, LT Returns for his third year as a starter after helping the team finish third in the ACC in average yards per play (6.6).

ANDRE SMITH, MLB Finished second on the team in tackles (113) and third in tackles for a loss (6.0).

M.J. STEWART, CB Finished sixth on the team in tackles (66) while leading the squad in pass breakups (11).

KEY LOSSES

MITCH TRUBISKY, QB Set single-season school records for passing yards (3,748), touchdown passes (30) and total offense (4,056 yards) in his lone season as the starter.

ELIJAH HOOD, RB Rushed for a total of 2,321 yards and 25 touchdowns over the last two years while averaging 6.4 yards per carry during that span.

RYAN SWITZER, WR Started for three years and set school records for career receptions (244), receiving yards (2,907), and punt returns for touchdowns (ACC-record seven).

RISING STAR

Running back **Michael Carter** got a head start by enrolling in January, and he might be the starter on opening day. With his balance, quickness, vision and small stature, he reminds some of another UNC rusher from Florida: Giovani Bernard.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 7-5, 4-4 ACC

The Tar Heels have the most wins among Coastal Division programs over the last two years, but Larry Fedora's team is unlikely to contend in 2017. The departure of QB Mitch Trubisky, running back Elijah Hood and two starting linemen prompted Fedora to search for immediate help in the form of four graduate transfers. LSU grad transfer Brandon Harris is expected to replace Trubisky, but he struggled with consistency in Baton Rouge. New defensive coordinator John Papuchis inherits six returning starters from a unit that showed progress under Gene Chizik. With the personnel turnover on offense, the Heels may have to lean on their defense more in 2017. The schedule won't provide any breaks: UNC hosts Notre Dame and plays Louisville and NC State in crossover games. **Postseason: Pinstripe Bowl vs. Nebraska**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

WELCOME BACK Deke Adams has returned for a second stint as defensive line coach at UNC. Adams was part of Larry Fedora's first staff at UNC in 2012 after working with Fedora from 2009-11 at Southern Miss. Adams left to work at South Carolina from 2013-15 before spending last season on East Carolina's staff. "He hasn't changed a bit," Fedora says. "He still coaches them hard, gets after it, holds them accountable, and does a lot of things that I like."

REUNITED Three members of UNC's retooled defensive coaching staff have worked together before. In his third season at UNC, John Papuchis has taken over as defensive coordinator for Gene Chizik, who resigned after two seasons for family reasons. UNC hired Mike Ekeler (linebackers) from North Texas and Terry Joseph (defensive backs) from Texas A&M. Papuchis, Ekeler and Joseph worked together in 2006 at LSU, with Papuchis serving as a graduate assistant and Ekeler and Joseph working as interns.

BREAKTHROUGH? Many times in the spring, Fedora mentioned defensive tackle Jalen Dalton as an emerging leader. Dalton was the headliner of UNC's recruiting class in 2015 but has yet to deliver. He had more unsportsmanlike conduct penalties (three) than tackles for a loss (1.5), and more ejections (one) than sacks (zero) last season. He could provide a huge boost if he fulfills his potential.

THE GRADUATES UNC opted for graduate transfers to fill some personnel voids on offense. The Tar Heels signed running back Stanton Truitt (Auburn) and offensive linemen Cam Dillard (Florida) and Khaliel Rodgers (USC) during the spring and drew a commitment from quarterback Brandon Harris (LSU). "It will be great to bring them here with their leadership and history of playing," tight end Brandon Fritts says.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Larry Fedora

RECORD AT SCHOOL

40-25 (5 years)

CAREER RECORD

74-44 (9 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS

Gunter Brewer, Chris Kaporovic

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

John Papuchis

LOCATION

Chapel Hill, NC

STADIUM

Kenan Memorial Stadium (63,000)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



CB **M.J. STEWART**



with returners and newcomers. Bentley Spain is back for his third year as the starter at left tackle, which is a plus, but the rest of the line must be sorted out. Tommy Hatton is a nice talent as a center or guard, and he figures to play left guard this season. Two graduate transfers should provide depth and experience to a unit that needs them. Cam Dillard, who played at Florida and signed with UNC during the spring, is likely to start at center. Khaliel Rodgers from USC has experience at center and guard. He could be in the mix on the right side of the line with returnees R.J. Prince and William Sweet.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN This unit has struggled in recent years and lost Nazair Jones, its leader and best player, to the NFL. On the positive side, almost everyone else from last season is back.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

| | | | | |
|----|----|--------------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| WR | 7 | Austin Proehl (Sr.) | 48 | Thomas Jackson (Sr.) |
| WR | 17 | Anthony Ratliff-Williams (So.) | 5 | Juval Mollette (So.) |
| WR | 15 | Jordan Cunningham (Sr.) | 8 | J.T. Cauthen (Fr.) |
| LT | 75 | Bentley Spain (Sr.) | 72 | Mason Veal (So.) |
| LG | 52 | Tommy Hatton (So.) | 58 | Nick Polino (So.) |
| C | | Cam Dillard (Sr.) | 55 | Jay-Jay McCargo (Fr.) |
| RG | 71 | R.J. Prince (Sr.) | | Khaliel Rodgers (Sr.) |
| RT | 51 | William Sweet (So.) | 67 | Charlie Heck (So.) |
| TE | 82 | Brandon Fritts (Jr.) | 86 | Carl Tucker (So.) |
| QB | | Brandon Harris (Sr.) | 11 | Nathan Elliott (So.) |
| RB | 3 | Michael Carter (Fr.) | 2 | Jordon Brown (So.) |

DEFENSE (6)

| | | | | |
|-----|----|-------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| DE | 17 | Dajaun Drennon (Sr.) | 95 | Tyler Powell (Sr.) |
| DT | 92 | Aaron Crawford (So.) | 97 | Jalen Dalton (Jr.) |
| DT | 55 | Jason Strowbridge (So.) | 49 | Jeremiah Clarke (Jr.) |
| DE | 53 | Malik Carney (Jr.) | 12 | Tomon Fox (Fr.) |
| MLB | 10 | Andre Smith (Jr.) | 7 | Jonathan Smith (So.) |
| SLB | 23 | Cayson Collins (Sr.) | 25 | Ayden Bonilla (Jr.) |
| WLB | 36 | Cole Holcomb (Jr.) | 3 | Dominique Ross (So.) |
| CB | 6 | M.J. Stewart (Sr.) | 18 | Corey Bell Jr. (Jr.) |
| CB | 5 | Patrice Rene (So.) | 9 | K.J. Sails (So.) |
| FS | 1 | Myles Dorn (So.) | 29 | J.K. Britt (Jr.) |
| SS | 15 | Donnie Miles (Sr.) | 16 | D.J. Ford (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | | | |
|---|----|---------------------|----|----|---------------------------|
| K | 98 | Freeman Jones (Jr.) | KR | 17 | A. Ratliff-Williams (So.) |
| P | 39 | Tom Sheldon (So.) | PR | 7 | Austin Proehl (Sr.) |

ception, and that came against an FCS team (The Citadel). At least they returned it 58 yards for a touchdown, right? Still, the secondary was the strength of the defense, and it figures to be decent again. Seniors M.J. Stewart and Donnie Miles return for their third year as starters. Stewart is one of the ACC's top cover cornerbacks, and Miles is a sure-tackling safety who is sound against the run. A large group of young players — including four who played last year as true freshmen — provides depth as the Tar Heels hunt for more interceptions. "It's not that we gave up a bunch of passing yards or teams were just passing all over us," Miles says. "We did well in coverage, but we just didn't make the big plays. This year, we look forward to making them."

SPECIALISTS Logan (kickoffs) and Ryan Switzer (punts) were two of the nation's most dangerous return men, and they are gone. Replacing them are Ratliff-Williams and the sure-handed Proehl, respectively. UNC's punting game appears to be in good shape with sophomore Aussie Tom Sheldon, whose 50 punts last season yielded an NCAA-best two total return yards for the opposition. Freeman Jones is a capable replacement at kicker for Nick Weiler, who was mostly spectacular during the last two seasons, but Fedora is looking for Jones to be more consistent.

Scouting the TAR HEELS

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP NORTH CAROLINA

"They had a great signal caller last year and the year before, so chances are they'll have somebody pretty good this year. I don't know who it's going to be. You can say it's a product of the system, but I think they do a heck of a job identifying the skill sets that will work for them, and they've done a really nice job staying true to that system. ... Their offensive line was as good as we faced all year long, and they had two really good tailbacks and one of the best receivers in the league in (Ryan) Switzer, and they lose all those skill guys. They're going to be missing some key parts from teams that won a lot of games, and that's going to be the challenge for their staff. ... I think you look at what they were defensively before Coach (Gene) Chizik and how much they improved when he was there, I would have some concerns about him leaving. ... They could win the division or finish toward the bottom, but they'll score points. That system has withstood the test of time, and they're very comfortable with what they want to do and who they want to recruit. But if their defense falls off, they'll be average."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 28.4 | 97 |
| DEFENSE | 28.8 | 51 |
| MARGIN | -0.4 | 76 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| OFFENSE | 42.7% | 43 |
| DEFENSE | 43.6% | 102 |
| MARGIN | -0.9% | 74 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 6.6 | 17 |
| DEFENSE | 5.4 | 43 |
| MARGIN | +1.2 | 19 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.7 | 44 |
| DEFENSE | 4.1 | 31 |
| MARGIN | +0.6 | 23 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|
| PROJECTED | 7.4 | 12 |
| ACTUAL | -2 | 78 |
| MARGIN | -9.4 | 124 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

43.6 The Heels allowed a 43.6 percent success rate (102nd in FBS), and their average third-down distance was 6.3 yards (122nd). But they allowed just 4.1 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the 40), 31st in the country.

99 UNC must replace 99 percent of its passing yards and 71 percent of its receiving yards. The leading returning passer (Nathan Elliott) threw for 55 yards; Austin Proehl is the only receiver who had more than 186 yards last season.

-9.4 Based on national averages for fumble recoveries and the ratio of interceptions to passes broken up, UNC's turnover margin should have been about plus-7.4. Instead, it was minus-2, a difference of 9.4. Bad fortune cost the Heels about 47 points.

2017 NORTH CAROLINA ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------|
| 14 | Byrd, Logan | 6-3/230 | Fr. Warner Robins, GA |
| | Harris, Brandon | 6-3/206 | Sr. Bossier City, LA |
| 11 | Elliott, Nathan | 6-1/195 | So. Celina, TX |
| 16 | Miles, Manny | 6-0/185 | Jr. Baton Rouge, LA |
| 12 | Surratt, Chazz | 6-3/205 | Fr. Denver, NC |

| RUNNING BACKS | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------|--------------------|
| 2 | Brown, Jordan | 5-10/180 | So. Durham, NC |
| 3 | Carter, Michael | 5-9/185 | Fr. Navarre, FL |
| 27 | Graves, Darius | 5-8/190 | Jr. Greensboro, NC |
| 33 | James, Antonio | 5-7/175 | Jr. Monroe, NC |
| 32 | Schmidt, Jacob | 5-10/195 | Jr. Hickory, NC |
| 1 | Truitt, Stanton | 5-9/185 | Sr. Atlanta, GA |

| RECEIVERS | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|----------|------------------------|
| 18 | Cabrera, Josh | 6-3/205 | Jr. Jacksonville, NC |
| 8 | Cauthen, J.T. | 6-1/220 | Fr. Waxhaw, NC |
| 15 | Cunningham, Jordan | 6-2/190 | Sr. Ft. Lauderdale, FL |
| 28 | DiMaggio, Dante | 6-2/195 | Jr. Apex, NC |
| 4 | Groves, Rontavius | 5-11/175 | Fr. Nashville, TN |
| 48 | Jackson, Thomas | 5-11/195 | Sr. Charlotte, NC |
| 9 | Johnson, Roscoe | 6-1/180 | Fr. Jonesville, SC |
| 5 | Mollette, Juval | 6-4/210 | So. Randleman, NC |
| 21 | Perry, Devin | 6-2/205 | Jr. Memphis, TN |
| 7 | Proehl, Austin | 5-10/175 | Sr. Charlotte, NC |
| 17 | Ratliff-Williams, Anthony | 6-1/200 | So. Matthews, NC |
| 81 | Smith, Hunter | 5-8/150 | Jr. Asheville, NC |

| TIGHT ENDS | | | |
|------------|------------------|---------|--------------------|
| 80 | Bargas, Jake | 6-4/230 | So. Boca Raton, FL |
| 86 | Fritts, Brandon | 6-4/245 | Jr. Mentor, OH |
| 82 | Tucker, Carl | 6-2/240 | So. Cornelius, NC |
| 87 | Turner, Noah | 6-3/245 | Fr. Mundelein, IL |
| 83 | Walston, Garrett | 6-4/225 | Fr. Wilmington, NC |
| 89 | Worley, Jared | 6-3/200 | So. Pittsboro, NC |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|---------|------------------------|
| 78 | Barber, Layton | 6-4/310 | Fr. Southern Pines, NC |
| | Dillard, Cameron | 6-4/308 | Sr. Canton, MI |
| 79 | Elder, Luke | 6-4/290 | Fr. LaGrange, GA |
| 52 | Hatton, Tommy | 6-3/285 | So. Glen Rock, NJ |
| 67 | Heck, Charlie | 6-7/265 | So. Kansas City, MO |
| 69 | Johnson, Duiron | 6-1/305 | Fr. Reidsville, NC |
| 55 | McCargo, Jay-Jay | 6-4/300 | Fr. Alexandria, VA |
| 77 | Melton, Jonah | 6-3/305 | Fr. Mebane, NC |
| 58 | Polino, Nick | 6-4/275 | So. Buford, GA |
| 71 | Prince, R.J. | 6-6/325 | Sr. Albemarle, NC |
| 57 | Pritchett, Tyler | 6-3/300 | Fr. Auburn, AL |
| | Rodgers, Khalief | 6-3/305 | Sr. New Castle, DE |
| 75 | Spain, Bentley | 6-6/300 | Sr. Charlotte, NC |
| 51 | Sweet, William | 6-7/300 | So. Jacksonville, FL |
| 70 | Trull, Jonathan | 6-4/310 | Sr. Charlotte, NC |
| 72 | Veal, Mason | 6-5/300 | So. Charlotte, NC |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|
| 98 | Barringer, Connor | 6-5/240 | Sr. Davidson, NC |
| 53 | Carney, Malik | 6-3/230 | Jr. Alexandria, VA |
| 33 | Cater, Allen | 6-4/240 | So. Hiram, GA |

| | | | |
|----|--------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| 49 | Clarke, Jeremiah | 6-5/315 | Jr. Alexandria, VA |
| 92 | Crawford, Aaron | 6-1/310 | So. Ashburn, VA |
| 97 | Dalton, Jalen | 6-6/280 | Jr. Clemmons, NC |
| 91 | DeFranco, Nolan | 6-6/230 | Fr. Winter Garden, FL |
| 93 | Dinkins, Robert | 6-1/270 | Jr. Charlotte, NC |
| 17 | Drennon, Dajuan | 6-4/255 | Sr. Clementon, NJ |
| 94 | Dunlap, Marlon | 6-4/300 | So. Charlotte, NC |
| 12 | Fox, Tomon | 6-3/235 | Fr. Lawrenceville, GA |
| 96 | Gampe, Matt | 6-5/225 | Jr. Durham, NC |
| 34 | Gill, Xach | 6-4/260 | Fr. Wake Forest, NC |
| 14 | Lawler, Jake | 6-3/220 | Fr. Charlotte, NC |
| 95 | Powell, Tyler | 6-4/290 | Sr. Midlothian, VA |
| 90 | Riley, Jordan | 6-6/300 | Fr. Durham, NC |
| 43 | Sheridan, Hunter | 6-3/220 | So. Charlotte, NC |
| 55 | Strowbridge, Jason | 6-4/250 | So. Deerfield Beach, FL |

| LINEBACKERS | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| 4 | Artis, Allen | 6-1/215 | Sr. Marietta, GA |
| 52 | Blobe, Sam | 6-0/220 | Jr. Carboro, NC |
| 25 | Bonilla, Ayden | 6-2/220 | Jr. Woodstock, GA |
| 23 | Collins, Cayson | 6-1/235 | Sr. Charlotte, NC |
| 30 | Crafford, Hunter | 6-2/225 | Sr. Greenville, NC |
| 36 | Holcomb, Cole | 6-1/215 | Jr. New Smyrna Beach, FL |
| 21 | Hopper, Tyrone | 6-4/210 | Fr. Roswell, GA |
| 57 | Petty, Marlon | 6-0/190 | Sr. McLeansville, NC |
| 3 | Ross, Dominique | 6-3/210 | So. Jacksonville, FL |
| 10 | Smith, Andre | 6-0/235 | Jr. Jacksonville, FL |
| 7 | Smith, Jonathan | 6-1/230 | So. Laurinburg, NC |
| 54 | Sutton, Johnathon | 6-0/230 | So. Swansea, SC |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|----------|------------------------|
| 18 | Bell Jr., Corey | 5-9/170 | Jr. Charlotte, NC |
| 29 | Britt, J.K. | 6-0/195 | Jr. Newnan, GA |
| 38 | Brown, Thomas | 6-0/190 | Jr. Statesville, NC |
| 1 | Dorn, Myles | 6-2/185 | So. Charlotte, NC |
| 16 | Ford, D.J. | 6-3/195 | So. Ashland, AL |
| 28 | Gatling, Simeon | 5-10/185 | Fr. High Point, NC |
| 37 | Goins, Zach | 6-1/180 | Jr. Matthews, NC |
| 48 | James, Robert | 5-11/180 | Jr. W. Palm Beach, FL |
| 15 | Miles, Donnie | 5-11/210 | Sr. Miami, FL |
| 5 | Rene, Patrice | 6-2/200 | So. Alexandria, VA |
| 35 | Ripberger, Chris | 5-11/190 | Sr. Greensboro, NC |
| 8 | Ross, Greg | 6-1/175 | Fr. Temple Hills, MD |
| 9 | Sails, K.J. | 5-11/165 | So. Tampa, FL |
| 2 | Shaw, Tre | 6-0/180 | Fr. Ellenwood, GA |
| 42 | Stackhouse, Jaye | 6-1/200 | So. Suwanee, GA |
| 6 | Stewart, M.J. | 6-0/200 | Sr. Arlington, VA |
| 11 | Wolfolk, Myles | 6-0/190 | Fr. Upper Marlboro, MD |

| SPECIALISTS | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| 61 | Bancroft, Tommy (LS) | 6-4/215 | Jr. La Jolla, CA |
| 60 | Collins, Trevor (LS) | 6-1/235 | So. Ramseur, NC |
| 95 | Jeffrey, Tolson (K) | 6-0/190 | Jr. Richlands, NC |
| 98 | Jones, Freeman (K) | 6-0/200 | Jr. Bunn, NC |
| 91 | Lent, Hunter (P) | 6-5/230 | Jr. Elon, NC |
| 41 | Murphy, Kyle (LS) | 6-2/225 | Sr. Charlotte, NC |
| 39 | Sheldon, Tom (P) | 6-3/200 | So. Echuca, Australia |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 5-3 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | vs. Georgia # | L | 24-33 |
| Sept. 10 | at Illinois | W | 48-23 |
| Sept. 17 | James Madison | W | 56-28 |
| Sept. 24 | Pittsburgh | W | 37-36 |
| Oct. 1 | at Florida State | W | 37-35 |
| Oct. 8 | Virginia Tech | L | 3-34 |
| Oct. 15 | at Miami | W | 20-13 |
| Oct. 22 | at Virginia | W | 35-14 |
| Nov. 5 | Georgia Tech | W | 48-20 |
| Nov. 10 | at Duke | L | 27-28 |
| Nov. 19 | The Citadel | W | 41-7 |
| Nov. 25 | NC State | L | 21-28 |
| Dec. 30 | vs. Stanford % | L | 23-25 |

#Atlanta %Sun Bowl



AUSTIN PROEHL

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|----------------|-----|-------|-------|----|-----|
| Mitch Trubisky | 447 | 304 | 3,748 | 30 | 6 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Elijah Hood | 145 | 858 | 5.9 | 8 | |
| T.J. Logan | 120 | 650 | 5.4 | 7 | |
| Mitch Trubisky | 93 | 308 | 3.3 | 5 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Ryan Switzer | 96 | 1,112 | 11.6 | 6 | |
| Bug Howard | 53 | 827 | 15.6 | 8 | |
| Austin Proehl | 43 | 597 | 13.9 | 3 | |
| T.J. Logan | 29 | 244 | 8.4 | 3 | |
| Elijah Hood | 25 | 142 | 5.7 | 0 | |
| Mack Hollins | 16 | 309 | 19.3 | 4 | |

KICKING: Nick Weiler, 15-21 FGs, 51-52 XPs, 96 points

TACKLES: Cole Holcomb, 115; Andre Smith, 113

SACKS: Malik Carney, 5.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Dominique Green, 1

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 32.3 ppg | 7 | 44 |
| Rushing | 145.8 ypg | 11 | 100 |
| Passing | 293.2 ypg | 3 | 22 |
| Total | 439.0 ypg | 7 | 45 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 24.9 ppg | 8 | 43 |
| Rushing | 227.3 ypg | 14 | 109 |
| Passing | 180.8 ypg | 1 | 12 |
| Total | 408.1 ypg | 10 | 63 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| -2 | -0.15 | 11 | 78 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|----------|-----------------|
| Brian Anderson | OL | 6-3/290 | Montgomery, AL |
| Antwuan Branch | RB | 6-0/205 | Clarksville, TN |
| Michael Carter | RB | 5-9/185 | Navarre, FL |
| J.T. Cauthen | WR | 6-1/220 | Waxhaw, NC |
| Beau Corrales | WR | 6-4/205 | Georgetown, TX |
| C.J. Cotman | DB | 5-10/175 | Clearwater, FL |
| Jeremiah Gemmel | LB | 6-1/210 | Sharpsburg, GA |
| Xach Gill | DL | 6-4/265 | Wake Forest, NC |
| Jake Lawler | DL | 6-3/220 | Charlotte, NC |
| Jonah Melton | OL | 6-3/305 | Mebane, NC |
| Marcus McKethan | T | 6-6/330 | Barnwell, SC |
| Dazz Newsome | DB | 5-11/175 | Hampton, VA |
| Jordan Riley | DL | 6-6/300 | Durham, NC |
| Kayne Roberts | LB | 6-3/200 | Greenback, TN |
| Malik Robinson | LB | 6-0/225 | Snelville, GA |
| Billy Ross | OL | 6-5/315 | Huntington, WV |
| Caleb Rozar | DB | 6-3/195 | Clarksville, TN |
| Noah Ruggles | K | 6-3/180 | Odessa, FL |
| Tre Shaw | DB | 6-0/180 | Ellenwood, GA |
| Jordan Tucker | OL | 6-6/335 | Roswell, GA |

UNC signed four of the state of North Carolina's top 10 players a year after it was shut out in that category. The Tar Heels also addressed their needs, signing five offensive linemen (headlined by in-state guard Jonah Melton) and four defensive backs after targeting those positions. With most of a star-studded offense departing, the skill positions also were important to restock. UNC welcomes a pair of talented tailbacks in Michael Carter and Antwuan Branch, and each will have a chance — or possibly an obligation — to contribute immediately. UNC's coaches realized too late that Mitch Trubisky might not return at quarterback, so they didn't find a potential replacement in this class. But they did sign two wide receivers and continued their efforts to build a passable defense. The defensive line has underperformed in recent years, but the addition of in-state prospects Jake Lawler, Xach Gill and Jordan Riley figures to help.



PITTSBURGH PANTHERS

National Forecast: 31 /// ACC Coastal Prediction: 3

The Pittsburgh Panthers were the answer to two distinct trivia questions in 2016. The first: Who handed national champion Clemson its only defeat? The second: Who upset Big Ten champ Penn State and effectively knocked the Nittany Lions out of a College Football Playoff spot? Both victories were equal parts stunning and significant for coach Pat Narduzzi's program. The next step is riding that colossal wave and building on consecutive 8–5 seasons. Pittsburgh tied for second in the ACC's Coastal Division at 5–3.

"We did some good things," says Narduzzi, whose Panthers lost four games by seven points or fewer. "But we still have work to do."

Pittsburgh must overcome the losses of record-setting tailback James Conner, talented quarterback Nathan Peterman and innovative coordinator Matt Canada, whose 10th-ranked scoring offense was the most prolific in program history. Canada has since moved on to LSU.

There is also the matter of facing one of the toughest schedules in the nation. Back-to-back September showdowns with Penn State and Oklahoma State will challenge the Panthers early.

True to his personality, the fiery Narduzzi is facing it all head on. Despite returning only 10 starters, he believes a winning mindset has permeated his program. "The culture we've got going on right now and the enthusiasm of the players is at a high level," he says.

QUARTERBACKS College football aficionados are surely familiar with the name Max Browne. The graduate transfer from USC was ranked among the nation's top quarterbacks in the class of 2013. He opened last season as the Trojans' starter but was supplanted in late September by phenom Sam Darnold. Seeking a fresh start, the 6'5", 230-pound Browne could offer immediate relief for a Pittsburgh team that flourished under two-year starter Peterman. "I've waited around long enough," says Browne, who completed 62.4 percent of his passes at USC last season for 507 yards with two touchdowns and two interceptions. A key for Browne is getting in sync with first-year offensive coordinator Shawn Watson. Should Browne struggle, Watson could turn to promising redshirt freshman Tom MacVittie or sophomore Ben DiNucci.

RUNNING BACKS Trying to replace the NFL-bound Conner could require two, if not three, backs. He was that dominant. Junior Qadree Ollison is a proven commodity, having been named ACC Offensive Rookie of the Year after replacing an injured Conner in 2015. He ran for 1,121 yards that season before serving as a reserve last fall. Another intriguing candidate is true freshman A.J. Davis, a four-star recruit from Florida who turned down offers from Michigan, Ohio State, Florida State and Auburn, among others. A third option is Chawntez Moss, who ran for 227 yards as a freshman. A player to watch is junior fullback George Aston, who quietly produced 10 touchdowns (five rushing, five receiving) a season ago.

RECEIVERS Blur is the word on the outside. Junior Quadree Henderson and senior Jester Weah form a tandem that can break a game open with their speed. A consensus All-America kick returner, Henderson amassed 917 yards from scrimmage (631 rushing, 286 receiving) in 2016. His ability to turn a reverse into a big gain is undeniable — he averaged 10.5 yards and scored five times on rushing plays — but he needs to round out his game as a pass catcher, given that he had only 26 receptions for one score. Weah, a former high school sprint champion, blazed his way to 36 catches for 870 yards and 10 touchdowns. His average of 24.2 yards per catch ranked second nationally and first in the ACC. An X-factor could be tight end Chris Clark, a UCLA transfer.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Pittsburgh said goodbye to cornerstones Dorian Johnson and Adam Bisnowaty on the left side. All, however, is not lost. The three returnees — center Alex Officer, right guard Alex Bookser and tackle Brian O'Neill — have combined for 76 career starts. Each started every game last season. O'Neill and Bookser are breakout candidates. The former is a reigning All-ACC second-team selection, and the latter was an honorable mention pick. The duo helped Pittsburgh tie for third nationally in fewest sacks yielded at 0.77 per game. O'Neill will take over at left tackle for Bisnowaty. Jaryd Jones-Smith is no stranger to the tackle position, having started three games on the left side in 2014. He missed 2015 due to injury and was a reserve last season. He'll move into O'Neill's former spot on the right side. Officer and Connor Dintino rotated between center and left guard in the spring.

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|------------------|
| Sept. 2 | Youngstown State |
| Sept. 9 | at Penn State |
| Sept. 16 | Oklahoma State |
| Sept. 23 | at Georgia Tech |
| Sept. 30 | Rice |
| Oct. 7 | at Syracuse |
| Oct. 14 | NC State |
| Oct. 21 | at Duke |
| Oct. 28 | Virginia |
| Nov. 9 | North Carolina |
| Nov. 18 | at Virginia Tech |
| Nov. 24 | Miami |

KEY PANTHERS

QUADREE HENDERSON, WR/KR Consensus All-American led the nation in kickoff return touchdowns (three) and combined kick return yards (1,166) en route to 2,083 all-purpose yards.

JORDAN WHITEHEAD, S A two-time All-ACC pick, the two-way threat had 65 tackles and 98 rushing yards despite missing four games.

JESTER WEAH, WR Led ACC and ranked second nationally at 24.2 yards per catch. Finished with 36 receptions for 870 yards and 10 touchdowns.

KEY LOSSES

JAMES CONNER, RB His 3,733 career rushing yards and 56 total touchdowns rank second in school annals behind 1976 Heisman Trophy winner Tony Dorsett.

NATHAN PETERMAN, QB Two-year starter led ACC in passing efficiency in 2016.

EJUAN PRICE, DE Had a combined 24.5 sacks the past two seasons, including 13 in 2016.

RIISING STAR

Junior defensive end **Dewayne Hendrix**, the buzz of 2016 training camp after transferring in from Tennessee, never got a chance to showcase his immense talents due to an opening-game foot injury. The 6'4", 260-pound Hendrix is gifted with speed, strength and size.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 7-5, 5-3 ACC

Pat Narduzzi was hired at Pittsburgh after fielding some of the best defenses in the nation at Michigan State, but it's been the offense that has made headlines during his tenure with the Panthers. With some key departures — most notably at quarterback — Pitt will be hard pressed to average 40 points per game again, so it will be up the defense, which has big holes to fill in the front seven, to take a big step forward. The Panthers believe Dwayne Hendrix, former transfer from Tennessee, can be a difference maker. The non-conference schedule — which features games against Penn State and Oklahoma State — is very difficult, but the Panthers don't play Florida State, Clemson or Louisville from the Atlantic Division. Pittsburgh is good enough to be a factor in the Coastal race. **Postseason: Independence Bowl vs. Texas A&M**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

BIG FINISHER Brian O'Neill was a big-time scorer last season, the emphasis on "big." The 6'6", 300-pound junior tackle ran the ball twice, with both attempts resulting in touchdowns. The first came via a lateral and went for 24 yards. The second came on an end-around that covered 5. A former tight end, O'Neill even attempted two passes, both falling incomplete. A talented blocker, he earned recognition as an All-ACC second-team pick.

HIGH OCTANE Under departed offensive coordinator Matt Canada (who bolted to LSU), Pittsburgh produced point totals of 76, 56 and 45 en route to averaging 40.9 per game, good for 10th in the nation. New coordinator Shawn Watson, formerly of Texas, Louisville, Nebraska and Colorado, is tasked with maintaining the torrid pace. Watson played a role in the development of former Louisville and current Minnesota Vikings quarterback Teddy Bridgewater, and his '07 Nebraska offense ranked ninth nationally.

PICK UP 6 While the Pittsburgh offense amassed pinball-like numbers in 2016, the defense also got into the act. The Panthers produced four defensive touchdowns to lead the ACC and rank eighth nationally. This came a year after they scored three times. Current defenders Avonte Maddox (two), Jordan Whitehead (two) and Dane Jackson are responsible for five of those seven touchdowns.

HAPPY RETURNS Speed. Elusiveness. Electricity. Quadree Henderson flashed those attributes as a multi-dimensional weapon in 2016. The junior All-American led the nation in kickoff return touchdowns with three. He also ranked third nationally in punt return average (15.8), fifth in kickoff returns (30.5) and 11th in all-purpose yards (160.2). His 10 touchdowns came via rushing, receiving and returns.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Pat Narduzzi

RECORD AT SCHOOL

16-10 (2 years)

CAREER RECORD

16-10 (2 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Shawn Watson

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Josh Conklin

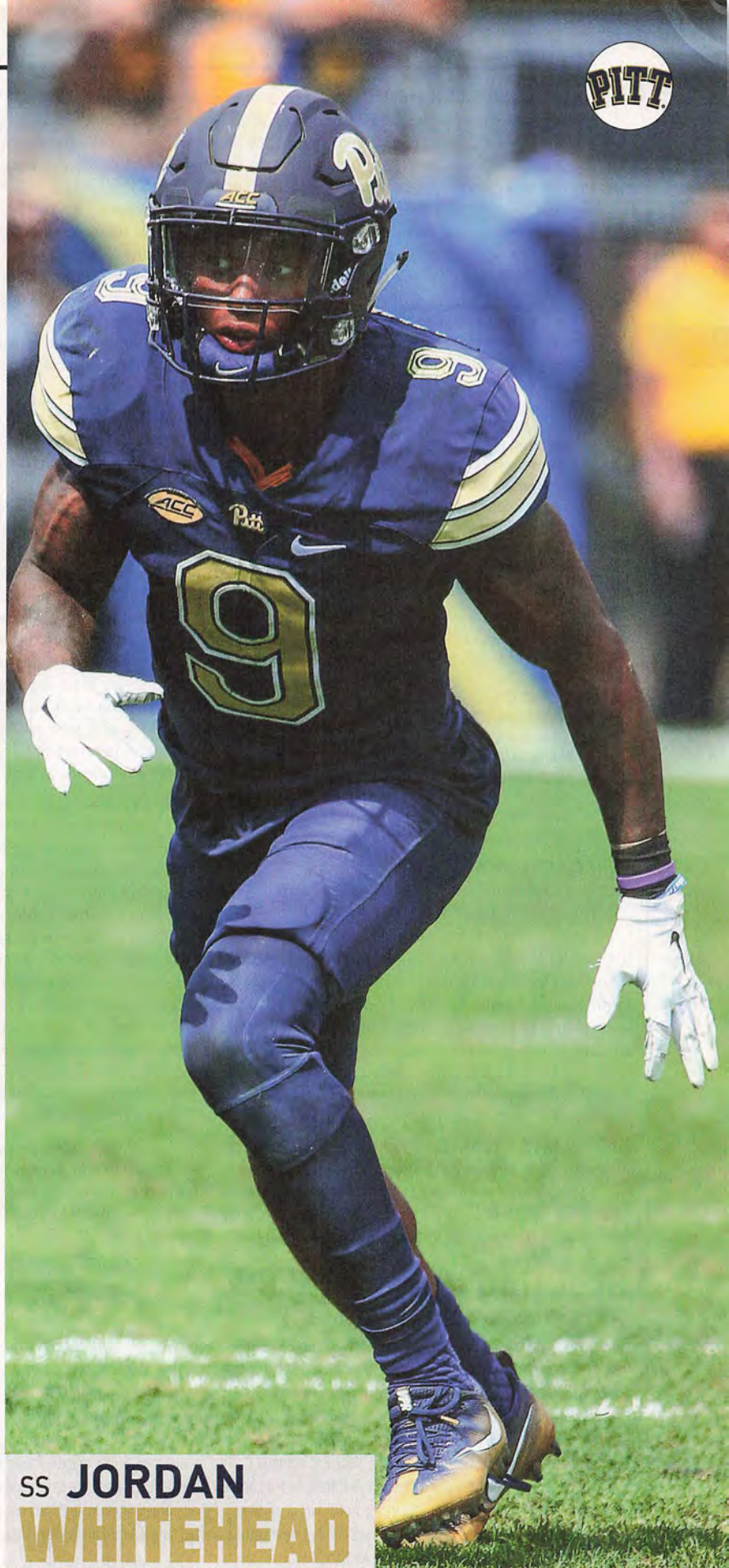
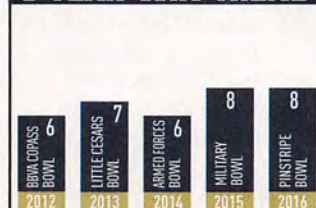
LOCATION

Pittsburgh, PA

STADIUM

Heinz Field (68,400)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



SS **JORDAN WHITEHEAD**



DEFENSIVE LINEMEN There is no way to sugarcoat it: The Pittsburgh defense needs help and plenty of it. The Panthers ranked 101st in total defense (452.8 ypg) and second to last in pass defense (333.2 ypg). Sure, they were good against the run at 16th overall, but that's because most teams attacked through the air. The hope is that Tennessee transfer Dewayne Hendrix can be a game changer, much like since-graduated Ejuan Price was in collecting 13 sacks last fall. After missing all but one contest with a foot injury, the athletic Hendrix has the makings of a disruptive force for a unit that lost three of four starters. Rori Blair, who has 20 career starts and 10 sacks, could flip-flop at both end positions. Ditto for senior Allen Edwards and redshirt freshman Kaezon Pugh. Edwards started four of Pittsburgh's final five games. A midseason discovery on the interior line was nose tackle Jeremiah Taleni, who had three sacks in three starts. He'll be joined on the inside by some combination of Amir Watts, Mike Herndon, Keyshon Camp and Shane Roy.

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

| | | | |
|-------|-------------------------|----|------------------------|
| WR 85 | Jester Weah (Sr.) | 6 | Aaron Mathews (So.) |
| WR 10 | Quadree Henderson (Jr.) | 5 | Tre Tipton (So.) |
| LT 70 | Brian O'Neill (Jr.) | 59 | Tony Pilato (So.) |
| LG 63 | Alex Officer (Sr.) | 56 | Brandon Ford (Fr.) |
| C 76 | Connor Dintino (Jr.) | 63 | Alex Officer (Sr.) |
| RG 78 | Alex Bookser (Jr.) | 54 | Justin Morgan (Fr.) |
| RT 55 | Jaryd Jones-Smith (Sr.) | 71 | Bryce Hargrove (Fr.) |
| TE 87 | Chris Clark (So.) | 45 | Devon Edwards (Sr.) |
| QB 4 | Max Browne (Sr.) | 7 | Thomas MacVittie (Fr.) |
| RB 37 | Quadree Ollison (Jr.) | | A.J. Davis (Fr.) |
| FB 35 | George Aston (Jr.) | 26 | Chawntez Moss (So.) |

DEFENSE (4)

| | | | |
|--------|-------------------------|----|------------------------|
| DE 8 | Dewayne Hendrix (Jr.) | 96 | Allen Edwards (Sr.) |
| DT 94 | Jeremiah Taleni (Sr.) | 10 | Keyshon Camp (Fr.) |
| DT 34 | Amir Watts (So.) | 93 | Shane Roy (Jr.) |
| DE 92 | Rori Blair (Sr.) | 40 | James Folston (Jr.) |
| OLB 39 | Saleem Brightwell (So.) | 25 | Elijah Zeise (Jr.) |
| MLB 58 | Quintin Wirginis (Sr.) | 36 | Chase Pine (Fr.) |
| OLB 23 | Oluwaseun Idowu (Jr.) | 28 | Anthony McKee (So.) |
| CB 14 | Avonte Maddox (Sr.) | 32 | Phillipie Motley (Jr.) |
| CB 11 | Dane Jackson (So.) | 3 | Damar Hamlin (So.) |
| SS 9 | Jordan Whitehead (Jr.) | 20 | Dennis Briggs (Jr.) |
| FS 43 | Jay Stocker (So.) | | Paris Ford (Fr.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|--------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| K 97 | Alex Kessman (Fr.) | KR 10 | Quadree Henderson (Jr.) |
| P 18 | Ryan Winslow (Sr.) | PR 10 | Quadree Henderson (Jr.) |

2015 ACC Rookie of the Year, Whitehead is a bona fide star, in the mold of former Pittsburgh great Darrelle Revis. Despite his injury, Whitehead still managed 65 tackles and an interception in earning second-team All-ACC honors. He could team with sophomore Jay Stocker, or top-rated recruit Paris Ford, at free safety. Senior Avonte Maddox, who has led the Panthers in pass break-ups and interceptions the past two seasons, returns as the starting boundary corner. Two other corners who gained experience as spot starters, Phillipie Motley and Dane Jackson, impressed Narduzzi during spring drills. Damar Hamlin was expected to solidify a cornerback position but played in just three games last season and was hampered by injuries in the spring.

SPECIALISTS With the graduation of Chris Blewitt, the school's all-time scoring leader among kickers, Pittsburgh is hoping redshirt freshman Alex Kessman can transition quickly. Senior Ryan Winslow enters his fourth season as the starting punter after averaging a career-best 42.6 yards in 2016. Henderson led the nation in kickoff return touchdowns (three) and ranked third and fifth in punt and kickoff returns, respectively.

Scouting the PANTHERS

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP PITTSBURGH

"They're going to run the ball first and foremost. The word I heard is they're going to run the same system or at least very similar to what they had, but they lost their coordinator, their tailback, their quarterback and a couple of the really good linemen they had. I thought their line was one of the best we faced, so that'll be interesting to see how that develops. On defense, they're going to stop the run and make you throw it. Last year, people threw for 400 yards on them regularly. It's just a matter of how good you are throwing the football. When [Pat] Narduzzi was in the Big Ten, that style, people couldn't handle it. With Pitt in the ACC, it's a quarterback-driven league. You've got corners they're putting on an island. He will pressure, but their corners are matched up outside and the safeties are extra hitters in the box. They're sort of getting nine in the box at all times. If their corners improve and they can get away with it, they'll be fine. At Michigan State, those corners were getting drafted, and it's cold and windy in the Big Ten in a league that runs the ball. This league isn't like that."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE | 29.8 |
| DEFENSE | 28.9 |
| MARGIN | +0.9 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|
| OFFENSE | 42.5% |
| DEFENSE | 40.5% |
| MARGIN | +2.0% |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE | 6.7 |
| DEFENSE | 6.0 |
| MARGIN | +0.7 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE | 5.4 |
| DEFENSE | 4.9 |
| MARGIN | +0.5 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| PROJECTED | -0.4 |
| ACTUAL | 1 |
| MARGIN | +1.4 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays [gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down]; 3-Explosiveness=yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

7.4 Pittsburgh's offense was tremendous in 2016, and it started on first down. The Panthers averaged 7.4 yards per play on first downs, seventh in the country. That makes life pretty easy for an offense.

5.4 Pitt remained efficient near the end zone, averaging 5.4 points per scoring opportunity (first downs inside the 40), first in the ACC. Unfortunately, the Panthers also allowed 4.9 points per opportunity, last in the ACC.

16.4 Pitt allowed 16.4 gains per game of 10-plus yards (112th in the country), 2.9 of 30-plus (113th). The pass defense was the primary offender here: The Panthers allowed a 64 percent completion rate (117th) and a passer rating of 143.6 (106th).

2017 PITTSBURGH ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 4 Browne, Max | 6-5/230 | Sr. | Sammamish, WA |
| 3 DiNucci, Ben | 6-2/215 | So. | Wexford, PA |
| 7 MacVittie, Thomas | 6-5/225 | Fr. | Cincinnati, OH |
| 8 Pickett, Kenny | 6-2/210 | Fr. | Oakhurst, NJ |
| 19 Zilinskas, Jake | 6-2/210 | Fr. | Indiana, PA |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 35 Aston, George | 6-0/245 | Jr. | Stephens City, VA |
| 22 Hall, Darrin | 5-11/225 | Jr. | Youngstown, OH |
| 40 Lively, Colton | 6-0/240 | Sr. | Lake Dallas, TX |
| 26 Moss, Chawntez | 5-11/210 | So. | Bedford, OH |
| 37 Otislon, Qadree | 6-2/225 | Jr. | Niagara Falls, NY |
| 39 Vreen, Kyle | 5-10/180 | Fr. | Aliquippa, PA |
| 36 Wood, Shawn | 6-0/210 | Fr. | New Castle, DE |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 82 Araujo-Lopes, Rafael | 5-9/185 | Jr. | Kissimmee, FL |
| 34 Bernsdorff, Mark | 5-11/185 | Sr. | Sylvania, OH |
| 11 Flowers III, Ruben | 6-3/200 | Fr. | Lima, OH |
| 10 Henderson, Quadree | 5-8/190 | Jr. | Wilmington, DE |
| 6 Mathews, Aaron | 6-4/205 | So. | Clairton, PA |
| 48 Malone, Kellen | 6-2/205 | Jr. | Dallas, TX |
| 5 Tipton, Tre | 6-0/190 | So. | Apollo, PA |
| 46 Vardzel, Michael | 5-10/180 | Fr. | Mount Pleasant, SC |
| 85 Weah, Jester | 6-3/210 | Sr. | Madison, WI |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| 81 Bossory, Nathan | 6-3/235 | Sr. | Chelsea, MI |
| 87 Clark, Chris | 6-6/255 | So. | Ridgewood, NJ |
| 45 Edwards, Devon | 6-4/270 | Sr. | Columbus, OH |
| 98 Schifano, DeAndre | 6-2/235 | So. | Penn Hills, PA |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|------------------------|
| 68 Benbrook, Kyle | 6-3/295 | So. | Washington, NJ |
| 78 Bookser, Alex | 6-6/315 | Jr. | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 76 Dintino, Connor | 6-3/310 | Jr. | Mashpee, MA |
| 74 Drake, Jerry | 6-5/315 | Fr. | Palm Beach Gardens, FL |
| 56 Ford, Brandon | 6-5/300 | Fr. | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 77 Galiyas, Alex | 6-2/290 | Jr. | Dexter, MI |
| 71 Hargrove, Bryce | 6-4/300 | Fr. | Akron, OH |
| 55 Jones-Smith, Jaryd | 6-7/325 | Sr. | Camden, NJ |
| 54 Morgan, Justin | 6-6/355 | Fr. | Bronx, NY |
| 67 Morrissey, Jimmy | 6-3/295 | Fr. | Huntington Valley, PA |
| 70 O'Neill, Brian | 6-6/300 | Jr. | Wilmington, DE |
| 63 Officer, Alex | 6-4/335 | Sr. | Rochester, NY |
| 59 Pilato, Tony | 6-5/320 | So. | Greensburg, PA |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 97 Alexandre, Deslin | 6-4/260 | Fr. | Pompano Beach, FL |
| 92 Blair, Rori | 6-4/245 | Sr. | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 10 Camp, Keyshon | 6-4/285 | Fr. | Lakeland, FL |
| 86 Desire, Julian | 6-3/215 | Fr. | Uniondale, NY |
| 96 Edwards, Allen | 6-4/245 | Sr. | Miami, FL |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|
| 40 Folston Jr., James | 6-3/245 | Jr. | Cocoa, FL |
| 8 Hendrix, Dewayne | 6-4/260 | Jr. | O'Fallon, IL |
| 66 Herndon, Mike | 6-4/315 | Jr. | Greenville, VA |
| 91 Jones II, Patrick | 6-5/250 | Fr. | Chesapeake, VA |
| 31 Pugh, Kaezon | 6-1/245 | Fr. | Aliquippa, PA |
| 93 Roy, Shane | 6-4/280 | Jr. | Reading, OH |
| 37 Sellers, Erik | 6-1/230 | So. | Clearfield, PA |
| 94 Taleni, Jeremiah | 6-2/290 | Sr. | Kaneohe, HI |
| 34 Watts, Amir | 6-3/285 | So. | Chicago, IL |
| 17 Weaver, Rashad | 6-5/265 | Fr. | Fort Lauderdale, FL |
| 90 Wheeler, Rashad | 6-3/290 | Fr. | Pittsburgh, PA |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|----------------------|
| 39 Brightwell, Saleem | 6-0/210 | So. | Paterson, NJ |
| 48 Deri, Peyton | 6-1/205 | Fr. | North Huntingdon, PA |
| 23 Idowu, Oluwaseun | 6-0/215 | Jr. | Wexford, PA |
| 28 McKee Jr., Anthony | 6-2/210 | So. | Columbus, OH |
| 51 Medure, Jim | 6-2/220 | So. | New Castle, PA |
| 36 Pine, Chase | 6-2/240 | Fr. | Williamsburg, VA |
| 53 Popp, Brian | 6-0/235 | Jr. | Loveland, OH |
| 44 Reynolds, Elias | 6-2/225 | Fr. | Brooklyn, NY |
| 41 Williams, Jalen | 6-2/215 | Jr. | Newburgh, NY |
| 58 Wirginis, Quintin | 6-2/240 | Sr. | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 25 Zeise, Elijah | 6-2/230 | Jr. | Pittsburgh, PA |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 35 Boatright, Rob | 5-10/185 | Sr. | Clairton, PA |
| 20 Briggs, Dennis | 5-10/190 | Jr. | Wilkinsburg, PA |
| 24 Campbell, Phil | 6-1/195 | Fr. | Kendall Park, NJ |
| 16 Coleman, Therran | 6-0/190 | Fr. | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 46 Dorsey, Rimoni | 6-0/190 | So. | Richmond, VA |
| 2 Ffrench, Maurice | 5-11/185 | So. | New Brunswick, NJ |
| 27 Garner, Bricen | 6-1/175 | Fr. | Pittsburgh, PA |
| 3 Hamlin, Damar | 6-1/185 | So. | McKees Rocks, PA |
| 21 Henderson, Malik | 6-0/185 | So. | Plantation, FL |
| 11 Jackson, Dane | 6-0/180 | So. | Coraopolis, PA |
| 14 Maddox, Avonte | 5-9/175 | Sr. | Detroit, MI |
| 7 Miller, Henry | 6-3/205 | Fr. | Kissimmee, FL |
| 32 Motley, Phillipie | 5-10/175 | Jr. | Columbus, OH |
| 43 Stocker, Jay | 6-2/185 | So. | Coatesville, PA |
| 9 Whitehead, Jordan | 5-11/190 | Jr. | Aliquippa, PA |

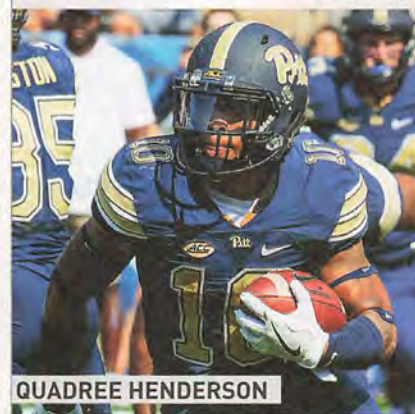
| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------------|---------|-----|----------------------|
| 55 Brake, Conrad (LS) | 6-0/230 | Fr. | Fairport, NY |
| 98 Christodoulou, Kirk (P) | 6-1/210 | Fr. | Melbourne, Australia |
| 97 Kessman, Alex (K) | 6-3/180 | Fr. | Clarkston, MI |
| 18 Winslow, Ryan (P) | 6-5/210 | Sr. | Maple Glen, PA |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 8-5, 5-3 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|--------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | Villanova | W | 28-7 |
| Sept. 10 | Penn State | W | 42-39 |
| Sept. 17 | at Oklahoma State | L | 38-45 |
| Sept. 24 | at North Carolina | L | 36-37 |
| Oct. 1 | Marshall | W | 43-27 |
| Oct. 8 | Georgia Tech | W | 37-34 |
| Oct. 15 | at Virginia | W | 45-31 |
| Oct. 27 | Virginia Tech | L | 36-39 |
| Nov. 5 | at Miami | L | 28-51 |
| Nov. 12 | at Clemson | W | 43-42 |
| Nov. 19 | Duke | W | 56-14 |
| Nov. 26 | Syracuse | W | 76-61 |
| Dec. 28 | vs. Northwestern # | L | 24-31 |

#Pinstripe Bowl



QUADREE HENDERSON

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------|----------|-----|
| Nathan Peterman | 306 | 185 | 2,855 | 27 | 7 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| James Conner | 216 | 1,092 | 5.1 | 16 | |
| Quadree Henderson | 60 | 631 | 10.5 | 5 | |
| Nathan Peterman | 72 | 286 | 4.0 | 3 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Jester Weah | 36 | 870 | 24.2 | 10 | |
| Scott Orndoff | 35 | 579 | 16.5 | 5 | |
| Quadree Henderson | 26 | 286 | 11.0 | 1 | |
| George Aston | 22 | 169 | 7.7 | 5 | |
| James Conner | 21 | 302 | 14.4 | 4 | |

KICKING: Chris Blewitt, 10-17 FGs, 66-69 XPs, 96 points

TACKLES: Matt Galambos, 85; Ryan Lewis, 79

SACKS: Ejuan Price, 13.0

INTERCEPTIONS: Avonte Maddox, 3

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 40.9 ppg | 2 | 10 |
| Rushing | 225.1 ypg | 3 | 28 |
| Passing | 221.7 ypg | 11 | 76 |
| Total | 446.8 ypg | 4 | 38 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 35.2 ppg | 13 | 106 |
| Rushing | 119.6 ypg | 4 | 16 |
| Passing | 333.2 ypg | 14 | 127 |
| Total | 452.8 ypg | 13 | 101 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| +1 | +0.08 | 7 | 58 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|--------------------|----|----------|------------------------|
| Cal Adomitis | LS | 6-1/210 | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Deslin Alexandre | DL | 6-4/250 | Pompano Beach, FL |
| Cameron Bright | LB | 6-0/210 | Montgomery, AL |
| Max Browne | QB | 6-5/210 | Sammamish, WA |
| Dontavious Butler | WR | 6-0/205 | Hallandale, FL |
| Grant Carrigan | TE | 6-7/260 | Wexford, PA |
| Kamonte Carter | DL | 6-4/300 | Germantown, MD |
| Kirk Christodoulou | P | 6-1/210 | Melbourne, Australia |
| A.J. Davis | RB | 6-0/205 | Lakeland, FL |
| Jerry Drake | OL | 6-5/315 | Palm Beach Gardens, FL |
| Owen Drexel | OL | 6-3/270 | Montclair, NJ |
| Paris Ford | DB | 6-0/175 | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Gabe Houy | OL | 6-6/265 | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Damarri Mathis | DB | 5-11/185 | Lakeland, FL |
| Kyle Nunn | LB | 6-3/200 | Findlay, OH |
| Kenny Pickett | QB | 6-2/195 | Oakhurst, NJ |
| Jason Pinnock | DB | 6-0/190 | Windsor, CT |
| Charles Reeves | TE | 6-5/280 | Steubenville, OH |
| Tyler Sear | TE | 6-4/245 | New Castle, PA |
| Todd Sibley | RB | 5-9/215 | Akron, OH |
| Michael Smith | WR | 6-1/205 | Vero Beach, FL |
| Darian Street | WR | 6-1/180 | Bethlehem, PA |
| Albert Tucker | LB | 6-1/210 | Plantation, FL |
| Jaylen Twyman | DL | 6-2/315 | Washington, DC |
| Carson Van Lynn | DL | 6-5/240 | Columbus, OH |
| Carter Warren | OL | 6-5/325 | Paterson, NJ |

In an effort to replenish a running game that lost record-setter James Conner, Pittsburgh landed its highest-ranked back in a half-decade when four-star A.J. Davis from Florida chose the Panthers over Michigan, Ohio State, Florida State and Auburn, among others. This prompted coach Pat Narduzzi to proclaim, "If we can beat the national champion (Clemson), we can beat anybody in recruiting." Narduzzi's 26-member class, which featured four four-star recruits, earned a No. 36 ranking by 247Sports. The top-rated player, safety Paris Ford of nearby Homestead, Pa., could provide immediate help to a secondary that ranked second to last nationally in passing yards allowed. Defensive tackle Jaylen Twyman of Washington, D.C., and cornerback Damarri Mathis of Lakeland could also add a needed boost to the defense.



VIRGINIA CAVALIERS

National Forecast: 87 /// ACC Coastal Prediction: 7

Bronco Mendenhall didn't know what he didn't know. He arrived at Virginia with methods and metrics that had proven successful in 11 seasons at BYU, and he was optimistic they would translate in his first season in Charlottesville. It didn't happen. Virginia struggled through a 2-10 campaign that was an eye-opener for the meticulous Mendenhall. After a year on the job, he has declared that in many ways he finally feels like the Cavaliers' coach, following a humbling season of hard lessons and "brutal facts," as he called them.

"A massive change effort is the right descriptor," he says. "It's going to take longer and be harder than what I first suspected."

Reality hit home in the first game, when Virginia was dominated by FCS opponent Richmond. Until then Virginia had spent much time on improving the team's conditioning and flipping its culture, establishing accountability and an "earned, not given" mentality.

Mendenhall says such steps were necessary to lay the foundation for the program and couldn't be skipped. In retrospect, though, Virginia probably should have spent more time on football execution and a little less on big-picture themes.

With the cultural groundwork now laid, Virginia worked more on football details this offseason. With a roster that is short on depth and physical maturity, however, Mendenhall's warning that a turnaround will take time seems prudent, if painful for a long-suffering fan base.

QUARTERBACKS Virginia finished the season with the odd spectacle of quarterbacks Kurt Benkert and Matt Johns rotating plays. The move smacked of desperation and backfired badly in a lopsided loss to Virginia Tech. Johns has graduated, and Benkert is the presumptive starter. His season last year was in many ways like Mendenhall's — eye-opening for all the wrong reasons. Benkert won the job after arriving from East Carolina following spring practice. Strong-armed and mobile, he got off to a quick start, passing for a school-record 421 yards in a win over Central Michigan. As the season went on, however, Benkert was nursing a shoulder injury and became increasingly gun-shy behind a leaky offensive line. He'd abandon the pocket before plays could develop, and was benched in favor of Johns. Healthy and 15 pounds lighter, Benkert needs to be more consistent. While the job appears to be his, Virginia will also tailor some plays for his dual-threat backups, Missouri transfer Marvin Zanders and redshirt freshman De'Vante Cross. "We like the complementary nature a running quarterback provides," Mendenhall says.

RUNNING BACKS Virginia was last in the ACC in rushing, and much of the blame fell on an offensive line that didn't create much daylight. Tailback Taquan "Smoke" Mizzell had a standout season nonetheless, and replacing him is the top priority. Daniel Hamm doesn't have Mizzell's burst or quickness, but he has been reliable when called on at tailback or special teams. Jordan Ellis, lauded as one of the team's hardest workers, also returns. Freshmen Lamont Atkins and Jamari Peacock enrolled early and likely will have to play. This group is a question mark this season.

RECEIVERS Speedy Olamide Zaccheaus was slowed early by a hamstring injury, and although he caught 51 passes, he never developed into the big-play threat the team hoped he would be. Getting Zaccheaus more touches is a priority this year. Keeping Doni Dowling healthy is another. A big, physical target, he led the team with 626 receiving yards. Sophomores Joe Reed and Hasise Dubois will have opportunities to do more. Junior David Eldridge, who averaged 22.1 yards on eight catches, left the team in the spring. Virginia threw sparingly to its tight ends but has promising younger players in Richard Burney and Tanner Cowley.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN Virginia added three graduate transfers and five freshmen, filling a need for both immediate help and long-term development. Three starters graduated, so developing continuity will be a challenge. But with more sheer numbers, coach Garrett Tujague is hopeful he can find the right combination. Jack McDonald returns at right guard and Jack English at left tackle. Former guard Jake Fieler takes over at center. Transfers Colin McGovern, John Montelus and Brandon Pertile bring much-needed experience and physical maturity. Pertile, from Oklahoma State, will be in the mix at right tackle. Montelus, a guard, and McGovern, a tackle, arrive from Notre Dame. Opportunities are available for younger players such as sophomore R.J. Proctor and Ryan Bischoff. At this point, Virginia is looking for help anywhere it can find it.

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Sept. 2 | William & Mary |
| Sept. 9 | Indiana |
| Sept. 16 | Connecticut |
| Sept. 22 | at Boise State |
| Oct. 7 | Duke |
| Oct. 14 | at North Carolina |
| Oct. 21 | Boston College |
| Oct. 28 | at Pittsburgh |
| Nov. 4 | Georgia Tech |
| Nov. 11 | at Louisville |
| Nov. 18 | at Miami |
| Nov. 24 | Virginia Tech |

KEY CAVALIERS

MICAH KISER, LB The quarterback of the defense led the ACC with 11.2 tackles per game and was No. 1 among all FBS players with 134 total stops.

QUIN BLANDING, FS Rangy and hard-hitting, Blanding is a sure tackler and physical presence who was voted All-ACC for the second straight season.

KURT BENKERT, QB A grad transfer who arrived last summer, Benkert tailed off last season but should benefit from health and a full year in the system.

KEY LOSSES

TAQUAN MIZZELL, RB The versatile "Smoke" finished his career as the only player in ACC history with 1,500 career rushing and receiving yards.

DONTE WILKINS, NT A prototypical nose tackle, the 6'1", 300-pound Wilkins anchored the middle of Virginia's 3-4 defense last season.

NICHOLAS CONTE, P Conte was the reason Virginia's best play was often a punt, leading the ACC in yards per kick and downing 34 of 74 kicks inside the 20.

RISEING STAR

Jordan Mack was the first true freshman to start a season opener at line-backer since Ahmad Brooks in 2003. His strip sack in the end zone clinched a win over Duke. After adding 25 pounds, he's moving inside but could still be a formidable pass rusher.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 3-9, 1-7 ACC

After 10 straight winning seasons at BYU, Bronco Mendenhall quickly discovered how big of a rebuilding project is ahead at Virginia. The Cavaliers lost seven of their 10 games by 14 or more points and were outgained by 104.5 yards per game in ACC contests last year. A winning record is unlikely in 2017, but there should be some signs of progress. Quarterback Kurt Benkert returns, and three graduate transfers will bolster the offensive line. Benkert needs more help from his supporting cast after the offense averaged only 22.5 points per game. There's more optimism on defense with eight returning starters, including All-America candidates in linebacker Micah Kiser and safety Quin Blanding. Doubling last year's win total would be a step in the right direction for Mendenhall.



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

SADDLE UP You would expect a coach named Bronco to know his way around a horse. Mendenhall, who was raised on a ranch, passed on some of his knowledge during last year's bye week, inviting players to his home outside Charlottesville for a team-bonding exercise that included horseback riding. For many, including 300-pound nose tackle Donte Wilkins, it was their first time in the saddle. Wilkins calls it an "amazing experience," although he doubts the horse felt the same way. "I wore the horse out pretty early," he says. "Coach Mendenhall ... said he went and checked on the horse and the horse's back was hurting."

NUMBERS GAME As they did last season, players once again had to "earn" their uniform numbers, selecting them based on the number of points accumulated during offseason workouts and practice. "This process starts over each year," Mendenhall says. "I think that's just a great precedent and a lesson for people."

BULKING UP To get the team fit enough to practice at the fast pace Mendenhall demands, Virginia devoted much of last year's offseason conditioning program to running. This year, the emphasis was more on adding size and strength — elements the Cavaliers lacked last season. "We need more size. We need more strength to look like an ACC football team and to play like an ACC football team," Mendenhall says.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS Virginia will play two Friday night games, at Boise State on Sept. 22 and in the regular-season finale vs. Virginia Tech on Nov. 24. The Cavaliers have played the Hokies on Fridays twice in Blacksburg but never at home. They hosted the Broncos on a Friday in 2015.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Bronco Mendenhall

RECORD AT SCHOOL

2-10 (1 year)

CAREER RECORD

101-53 (12 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Robert Anae

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Nick Howell

LOCATION

Charlottesville, VA

STADIUM

Scott Stadium (61,500)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



DB **QUIN**
BLANDING



DEFENSIVE LINEMEN Donte Wilkins was a prototypical two-gap nose, and a productive one at that. With Wilkins gone, finding a new nose is Virginia's most pressing need. Sophomores Juwan Moye and James Trucilla are the leading candidates. "What our defense will look like will have a lot to do with how they play," Mendenhall says. Neither has Wilkins' bulk or strength, though both were working to add weight in the offseason. On the outside, end Andrew Brown finally lived up to the billing he brought with him as a five-star recruit and the Gatorade National Player of the Year in 2013. Moved from tackle, Brown trimmed down and benefited from the tutelage of line coach Ruffin McNeill. He led the team with 13 tackles for a loss and showed signs of developing into an elite pass rusher. Eli Hanback was a surprise at the

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

| | | | |
|-------|-------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| WR 7 | Doni Dowling (Sr.) | 80 | Hasise Dubois (So.) |
| WR 33 | Olamide Zaccheaus (Jr.) | 23 | Warren Craft (So.) |
| WR 81 | Joe Reed (So.) | 19 | Andre Levrone (Sr.) |
| LT 67 | Jack English (Sr.) | | Brandon Pertile (Sr.) |
| LG | John Montelus (Sr.) | 70 | Steven Moss (Jr.) |
| C 77 | Jake Fieler (Jr.) | 79 | Dillon Reinkensmeyer (So.) |
| RG 71 | Jack McDonald (Sr.) | 65 | Ben Knutson (So.) |
| RT 78 | R.J. Proctor (So.) | | Colin McGovern (Sr.) |
| QB 6 | Kurt Benkert (Sr.) | | Marvin Zanders (Jr.) |
| RB 10 | Jordan Ellis (Jr.) | | Jamari Peacock (Fr.) |
| TB 22 | Daniel Hamm (Sr.) | | Lamont Atkins (Fr.) |

DEFENSE (8)

| | | | |
|--------|----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| DE 9 | Andrew Brown (Sr.) | 90 | Jack Powers (Sr.) |
| NT 95 | Juwan Moye (So.) | 57 | James Trucilla (So.) |
| DE 58 | Eli Hanback (So.) | 20 | Steven Wright (So.) |
| OLB 13 | Chris Peace (Jr.) | 36 | Gladimir Paul (So.) |
| ILB 37 | Jordan Mack (So.) | 40 | C.J. Stalker (Jr.) |
| ILB 53 | Micah Kiser (Sr.) | 42 | Jahvon Simmonds (So.) |
| OLB 17 | Malcolm Cook (Sr.) | 29 | Eric Gallon (Jr.) |
| CB 5 | Tim Harris (Sr.) | 14 | Myles Robinson (Jr.) |
| CB 34 | Bryce Hall (So.) | 31 | Kareem Gibson (So.) |
| SS 21 | Juan Thornhill (Jr.) | 25 | Chris Sharp (So.) |
| FS 3 | Quin Blanding (Sr.) | 39 | Chris Moore (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|----------------------|-------|-------------------|
| K | Brian Delaney (Fr.) | KR 81 | Joe Reed (So.) |
| P 47 | Lester Coleman (Jr.) | PR 22 | Daniel Hamm (Sr.) |

other end, holding down the spot as a redshirt freshman. Arizona State transfer Jack Powers brought strength and size at 305 pounds and gives Virginia another experienced end as well as someone capable of playing inside.

LINEBACKERS Micah Kiser ended the suspension early, announcing in December that he would return for his senior season. "I want to be part of the change here at UVA," he said. Kiser led the ACC and was third in the nation in tackles and was chosen first-team All-ACC and second-team All-America. He's got a motor that doesn't stop and makes up for his lack of explosive speed with anticipation and by taking the right pursuit angles. His return gives the unit someone to build around. It also helps soften the loss of Matt Terrell and Landon Word, who made an impact as true freshmen but opted to transfer. Word was slated to play alongside Kiser as a replacement for Zach Bradshaw. It's unclear who'll fill that spot now. Terrell played well on the outside, providing a physical presence against the run. But Virginia has options there, with pass rusher Chris Peace and the athletic Jordan Mack returning, and with Malcolm Cook, who missed the 2016 season with a heart ailment, also back.

DEFENSIVE BACKS The other half of the ACC's top tackling duo, free safety Quin Bland-

ing, took longer than Kiser to make his NFL decision but also opted to return. Slowed by a hamstring injury, Blanding was nevertheless voted All-ACC for the second straight season. His return is huge for the secondary. It was a long year back there. "We never really got a handle on big plays," Mendenhall says. Injuries took a toll, particularly at cornerback. Darius Latimore missed the season. Tim Harris was done after two games, and Myles Robinson was finished after four. All return, as does Bryce Hall, who started seven games as a true freshman. The depth at corner has allowed hard-hitting Juan Thornhill to move to strong safety.

Scouting the CAVALIERS

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP VIRGINIA

"They're not particularly fast. The best player on the team was the tailback (Smoke Mizzell), and he's gone, so how do they adapt what they were doing? The coaches there have won a lot of games over the years and they know what they're doing, but they need to adapt what they do to the kids on their team. I think they'll take a step forward and play people tough, but I don't think they'll be talented enough to blow anyone out. ... That's just such a cultural change with Bronco (Mendenhall). I think he's a heck of a coach and knows exactly what his vision is and how to get it done. His staff is aligned with it, it's just a matter of how quick he can turn that ship. It'll be one of those things that all of a sudden it turns and it'll be beautiful if they give him enough time. His message isn't for everybody. BYU was so different because his message has religious overtones, like, we're changing the world. For BYU that fits perfect. For a kid out of Virginia Beach? I don't know. That's not what recruits in the South even remotely are thinking about. They're thinking, 'We're going pro.' But he's a really good coach and his staff on both sides of the ball is tremendous."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 31.1 | 37 |
| DEFENSE | 28.6 | 46 |
| MARGIN | +2.5 | 35 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| OFFENSE | 39.0% | 89 |
| DEFENSE | 42.0% | 81 |
| MARGIN | -3.0% | 90 |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.9 | 119 |
| DEFENSE | 6.3 | 108 |
| MARGIN | -1.4 | 123 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.2 | 94 |
| DEFENSE | 4.6 | 77 |
| MARGIN | -0.4 | 97 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------|
| PROJECTED | 1.0 | 63 |
| ACTUAL | -9 | 116 |
| MARGIN | -10.0 | 126 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck" Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

4.62 Virginia averaged 4.62 yards on first downs, second worst in the nation. The Cavaliers also allowed 5.99 first-down yards per play (76th). Their overall yards per play margin was minus-1.4 (123rd).

+2.5 The Hoos' field position margin was plus-2.5 yards per possession, 35th in the country and fourth in the ACC. They were 10th in punting average and 34th in punt return average. That made up a little bit of the yardage difference.

-10 It might take bad luck to finish 2-10. Based on national averages for fumble recoveries and the ratio of interceptions to passes broken up, UVA's turnover margin should have been about plus-1. Instead, it was minus-9, a difference of 10 turnovers.

2017 VIRGINIA ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| Abramson, Sonny | 6-2/215 | So. | Chester, NJ |
| 6 Benkert, Kurt | 6-4/220 | Sr. | Cape Coral, FL |
| Cross, DeVante | 6-2/210 | Fr. | Allentown, PA |
| 99 Spaziani, Joe | 6-2/210 | Jr. | Hingham, MA |
| Zanders, Marvin | 6-1/185 | Jr. | Jacksonville, FL |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|------------------|----------|-----|----------------|
| Atkins, Lamont | 5-11/200 | Fr. | Burke, VA |
| 10 Ellis, Jordan | 5-11/215 | Jr. | Suwanee, GA |
| 22 Hamm, Daniel | 5-10/200 | Sr. | Wytheville, VA |
| Peacock, Jamari | 6-0/235 | Fr. | Yulee, FL |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|----------|-----|---------------------------|
| 85 Blackman, Cole | 6-1/205 | So. | Glen Allen, VA |
| Blundin, Ethan | 6-3/205 | So. | Charlottesville, VA |
| 23 Craft, Warren | 6-2/210 | So. | Roanoke, VA |
| 7 Dowling, Doni | 6-1/220 | Sr. | Richmond, VA |
| 80 Dubois, Hasise | 6-3/210 | So. | Irvington, NJ |
| 86 Gardner, Ross | 6-3/210 | Jr. | Mechanicsville, VA |
| 18 Hogg, Ben | 6-0/175 | Jr. | Lynchburg, VA |
| 19 Levrone, Andre | 6-3/220 | Sr. | Laurel, MD |
| 81 Reed, Joe | 6-3/210 | So. | Charlotte Court House, VA |
| 75 Tyree, Rambert | 6-0/175 | Jr. | Newport News, VA |
| 82 Urie, Braedon | 5-10/180 | Jr. | Purcellville, VA |
| 33 Zaccheaus, Olamide | 5-8/190 | Jr. | Philadelphia, PA |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 87 Burney, Richard | 6-4/255 | So. | Chesapeake, VA |
| 46 Butts, Evan | 6-4/250 | Jr. | Newtown Square, PA |
| 44 Cowley, Tanner | 6-4/230 | So. | Manasquan, NJ |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|
| 74 Bischoff, Ryan | 6-6/325 | So. | Plymouth, PA |
| Crutchfield, Osiris | 6-3/260 | So. | Crozet, VA |
| 67 English, Jack | 6-5/300 | Sr. | Richmond, VA |
| 77 Fieler, Jake | 6-5/305 | Jr. | Parkersburg, WV |
| 61 Jenkins, Trenton | 6-6/300 | So. | Charlottesville, VA |
| 65 Knutson, Ben | 6-9/315 | So. | Granger, IN |
| 71 McDonald, Jack | 6-5/295 | Sr. | Quincy, MA |
| McGovern, Colin | 6-5/310 | Sr. | New Lenox, IL |
| Montelus, John | 6-4/300 | Sr. | Everett, MA |
| 70 Moss, Steven | 6-4/305 | Jr. | Fredericksburg, VA |
| Pertile, Brandon | 6-6/295 | Sr. | Clearwater, FL |
| 78 Proctor, R.J. | 6-5/310 | So. | Beaeton, VA |
| 79 Reinkensmeyer, Dillon | 6-6/300 | So. | Highlands Ranch, CO |
| 64 Trent, Ben | 6-7/290 | So. | Forest, VA |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 55 Abdullah, Naji | 6-5/260 | So. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 93 Baumgardner, Christian | 6-6/275 | So. | Longport, NJ |
| Brooks, Christian | 6-5/265 | So. | Centerville, VA |
| 9 Brown, Andrew | 6-4/285 | Sr. | Chesapeake, VA |
| 58 Hanback, Eli | 6-4/300 | So. | Ashland, VA |
| 95 Moya, Juwan | 6-3/275 | So. | Lilburn, GA |
| 90 Powers, Jack | 6-5/305 | Sr. | Santa Cruz, CA |
| 49 Shifflett, Alec | 6-2/235 | Sr. | Afton, VA |
| 57 Trucilla, James | 6-1/275 | So. | Erie, PA |
| 20 Wright, Steven | 6-4/260 | So. | Waycross, GA |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|---------|-----|---------------------|
| Bryant, Dre | 6-3/225 | So. | Charlottesville, VA |
| 17 Cook, Malcolm | 6-1/225 | Sr. | Richmond, VA |
| 29 Gallon, Eric | 6-2/230 | Jr. | Lakeland, FL |
| 45 Kellam, Reed | 6-1/230 | So. | Richmond, VA |
| 53 Kiser, Micah | 6-2/240 | Sr. | Baltimore, MD |
| 37 Mack, Jordan | 6-4/230 | So. | Lithonia, GA |
| 36 Paul, Gladimir | 6-2/225 | So. | Philadelphia, PA |
| 12 Peace, Chris | 6-1/245 | Jr. | Newport News, VA |
| 93 Sheppard, Dominic | 6-2/230 | So. | Miami, FL |
| 42 Simmons, Jahvoni | 6-1/235 | So. | Virginia Beach, VA |
| 52 Snyder, Robert | 6-4/220 | So. | Lawrenceville, GA |
| 40 Stalker, C.J. | 6-2/240 | Jr. | West Chester, OH |

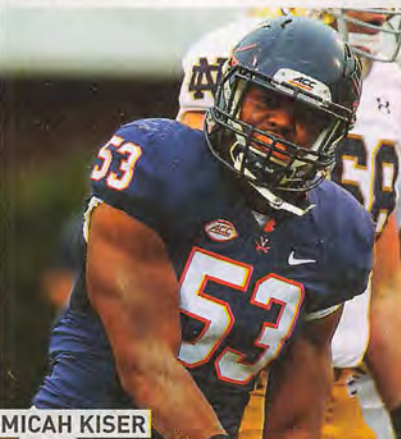
| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 3 Blanding, Quin | 6-2/215 | Sr. | Virginia Beach, VA |
| Burton, Riah | 6-1/185 | Fr. | New Castle, DE |
| Crowell, Germane | 6-3/185 | Fr. | Winston-Salem, NC |
| 66 Davis, Chuck | 5-10/175 | So. | Fairfax, VA |
| 60 Epps, CJ | 5-11/195 | So. | Chesapeake, VA |
| 32 Garner, Kirk | 5-11/175 | Sr. | Baltimore, MD |
| 31 Gibson, Kareem | 5-11/170 | So. | Johnstown, PA |
| 69 Grant, Nick | 6-3/195 | So. | Spotsylvania, VA |
| 34 Hall, Bryce | 6-3/200 | So. | Harrisburg, PA |
| 5 Harris, Tim | 6-2/205 | Sr. | Richmond, VA |
| Latimore, Darius | 6-0/180 | Jr. | Lawrenceville, GA |
| 39 Moore, Chris | 6-2/205 | So. | Ashburn, VA |
| Nelson, Brenton | 5-11/175 | So. | Miami, FL |
| 14 Robinson, Myles | 5-11/195 | Jr. | Olney, MD |
| 25 Sharp, Chris | 6-2/195 | So. | Burlington, NJ |
| 21 Thornhill, Juan | 6-1/195 | Jr. | Altavista, VA |

| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|------------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 47 Coleman, Lester (P) | 6-5/225 | Jr. | Martinsville, VA |
| Griffin, Nash (K) | 6-4/225 | So. | Indianapolis, IN |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 2-10, 1-7 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | Richmond | L | 20-37 |
| Sept. 10 | at Oregon | L | 26-44 |
| Sept. 17 | at Connecticut | L | 10-13 |
| Sept. 24 | Central Michigan | W | 49-35 |
| Oct. 1 | at Duke | W | 34-20 |
| Oct. 15 | Pittsburgh | L | 31-45 |
| Oct. 22 | North Carolina | L | 14-35 |
| Oct. 29 | Louisville | L | 25-32 |
| Nov. 5 | at Wake Forest | L | 20-27 |
| Nov. 12 | Miami | L | 14-34 |
| Nov. 19 | at Georgia Tech | L | 17-31 |
| Nov. 26 | at Virginia Tech | L | 10-52 |



MICAH KISER

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | COMP | YDS | TD | INT |
|-------------------|-----|------|-------|----|-----|
| Kurt Benkert | 406 | 228 | 2,552 | 21 | 11 |
| Matt Johns | 63 | 36 | 314 | 2 | 5 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Taquan Mizzell | 187 | 940 | 5.0 | 5 | |
| Albert Reid | 98 | 480 | 4.9 | 6 | |
| Jordan Ellis | 14 | 61 | 4.4 | 1 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Taquan Mizzell | 52 | 404 | 7.8 | 2 | |
| Olamide Zaccheaus | 51 | 584 | 11.5 | 7 | |
| Doni Dowling | 50 | 626 | 12.5 | 4 | |
| Keeon Johnson | 49 | 476 | 9.7 | 3 | |

KICKING: Sam Hayward, 4-8 FGs, 19-19 XPs, 31 points

TACKLES: Micah Kiser, 134; Quin Blanding, 120

SACKS: Micah Kiser, 6.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Juan Thornhill, 3

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 22.5 ppg | 12 | 115 |
| Rushing | 113.6 ypg | 14 | 121 |
| Passing | 239.3 ypg | 10 | 61 |
| Total | 352.9 ypg | 12 | 112 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 33.8 ppg | 12 | 99 |
| Rushing | 190.0 ypg | 12 | 78 |
| Passing | 256.6 ypg | 12 | 103 |
| Total | 446.6 ypg | 12 | 93 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| -9 | -0.75 | 14 | 117 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|----------|-------------------|
| Mandy Alonso | DL | 6-2/290 | Miami, FL |
| Lamont Atkins | RB | 5-11/200 | Burke, VA |
| Joey Blount | DB | 6-2/180 | Fayetteville, GA |
| Darrius Bratton | DB | 6-1/160 | Roanoke, VA |
| Elliott Brown | LB | 6-6/220 | Odenton, MD |
| Isaac Buell | DL | 6-4/260 | Knoxville, TN |
| Riah Burton | DB | 6-1/180 | New Castle, DE |
| Tommy Christ | DL | 6-5/270 | Sterling, VA |
| Germane Crowell | DB | 6-3/185 | Winston-Salem, NC |
| Brian Delaney | K | 5-11/200 | Chantilly, VA |
| Tyler Fannin | OL | 6-3/290 | Hoschton, GA |
| Matt Gahm | LB | 6-3/225 | Highland Park, TX |
| Chris Glaser | OL | 6-4/255 | Solon, OH |

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Terrell Jana | WR/DB | 6-1/190 | Burnaby, BC |
| PK Kier | RB | 5-11/200 | Winchester, VA |
| John Kirven | DL | 6-5/260 | Raleigh, NC |
| Ryan Nelson | OL | 6-5/280 | Buena Park, CA |
| Jamari Peacock | RB | 6-0/245 | Yulee, FL |
| Darnell Pratt | WR | 6-3/170 | Ellicott City, MD |
| Shawn Smith | WR | 5-11/175 | Brunswick, GA |
| Charles Snowden | LB | 6-7/200 | Silver Spring, MD |
| Lindell Stone | QB | 6-2/205 | Dallas, TX |
| Ryan Swoboda | OL | 6-10/270 | Windermere, FL |
| Gerrik Vollmer | OL | 6-5/280 | Hamburg, Germany |
| Zane Zandier | LB | 6-3/205 | Pittsburgh, PA |

Bronco Mendenhall called this a "foundational" class. Thin up front, Virginia loaded up on linemen. Virginia failed to get a true nose tackle, but Mandy Alonso has the size and strength to get an early look there. With three grad transfers providing immediate help, the offensive linemen signed will probably be brought along as developmental players. The players most likely to contend for immediate time are cornerback Germane Crowell and running backs Jamari Peacock and Lamont Atkins. All enrolled early. Virginia will also need immediate help from placekicker Brian Delaney, a Parade All-American. Virginia signed players from 12 states but none from the hotbed "757" region of the state for the second straight year and none from the Richmond area for the first time since 2004.



VIRGINIA TECH HOKIES

National Forecast: 25 /// ACC Coastal Prediction: 2

Justin Fuente stewed at the postgame press conference, not content with simply having taken eventual national champion Clemson to the wire a wild ACC Championship Game, which the Hokies lost 42-35 in Orlando. "It's a pretty somber locker room, because they didn't just come to play a close game or do anything other than win the ballgame," Fuente said, not content with a moral victory.

Fuente had plenty of success after succeeding the legendary Frank Beamer as Virginia Tech's coach, returning the school to its 10-win standard, claiming the Coastal Division title for the first time since 2011 and giving Clemson all it could handle. Now comes the harder part: restoring the Hokies to their former mantle as ACC champions.

He'll have to reload, especially on offense, to accomplish that goal this year. Gone is a small but productive senior class, plus record-setters in quarterback Jerod Evans, receiver Isaiah Ford and tight end Bucky Hodges, who all left early for the NFL. But Hokies fans hope a full year in the new system, several key returning pieces and Fuente's offensive acumen can offset some of the loss of talent.

It helps to have Bud Foster's always-trusty defense, and with six returning starters in the line-backing corps and secondary, plus a young, talented group stepping into larger roles on the line, it's not out of the question to expect the D to hold down the fort until the offense is up to snuff. Foster's units have carried far worse offenses before. And in a Coastal Division that doesn't figure to have a clear-cut frontrunner, there are plenty of reasons to believe Virginia Tech has as good of a chance as anybody to come out on top.

QUARTERBACKS It's a near complete reset at quarterback after Evans' one record-setting year. The three primary competitors for the job this year haven't taken a snap in a Division I game. The coaches are high on Josh Jackson, the son of former Michigan running backs coach Fred Jackson. The younger Jackson briefly popped into the QB battle last August, with Fuente praising his maturity and decision-making. A year in the system helps, which is more than the other two have. A.J. Bush joined the team in the winter after two years at Nebraska and a fall at Iowa Western Community College. He never got on the field at the former and had numbers that left a lot to be desired at the latter. Hendon Hooker, a 6'4", 196-pound dual threat who enrolled early, could be a starter in future years but might face a steep learning curve in Year 1. Whoever wins the job will be inexperienced, but Fuente has worked wonders with young quarterbacks in the past.

RUNNING BACKS The Hokies didn't have much continuity in the running game, with Evans finishing as the team's leading rusher from the quarterback position. The picture doesn't get any clearer with ultra utility back Sam Rogers graduating. Something didn't click for Travon McMillian under the new staff, and his rushing total dropped from 1,043 yards in 2015 to 671 last fall. But he still scored 10 total touchdowns and figures to be one of the primary options again. The competition's wide open, however, and could include Deshaun McCleese (a small but shifty back who missed last year following shoulder surgery), Steven Peoples (a stout, powerful runner who moves from H-back), Terius Wheatley (a prep school addition whose father is former Michigan star Tyrone Wheatley) and Jalen Holston (a 6'0", 220-pound incoming freshman who was Fuente's first running back recruit). Tech ran for 183.1 yards per game last year, its most since 2011, but the running backs need to carry more of the weight, especially between the tackles.

RECEIVERS Ford and Hodges finished their careers first and fifth on the school's all-time receiving list, respectively, having caught a combined 343 passes for 4,714 yards and 44 touchdowns, so the Hokies have a lot to replace in the passing game, to say the least. Getting back Cam Phillips, Tech's third all-time leading receiver who nearly hit the 1,000-yard mark last year, is a nice start, but there are questions galore beyond him. The diminutive C.J. Carroll, a former walk-on, is a threat in the slot, as is newcomer Kalil Pimpleton. But the Hokies need outside options to step up. Two 2016 signees — Eric Kumah and Phil Patterson — are the frontrunners to join Phillips out wide, while speedster Henri Murphy and Ohio State graduate transfer James Clark could find roles. Tight end Chris Cunningham caught six passes last year. Four went for TDs. There's talent here, just not much that's developed.

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|---------------------|
| Sept. 3 | vs. West Virginia # |
| Sept. 9 | Delaware |
| Sept. 16 | at East Carolina |
| Sept. 23 | Old Dominion |
| Sept. 30 | Clemson |
| Oct. 7 | at Boston College |
| Oct. 21 | North Carolina |
| Oct. 28 | Duke |
| Nov. 4 | at Miami |
| Nov. 11 | at Georgia Tech |
| Nov. 18 | Pittsburgh |
| Nov. 24 | at Virginia |

#Landover, MD

KEY HOKIES

CAM PHILLIPS, WR The senior can become the school's all-time leader with 46 more catches and 905 yards.

ANDREW MOTUAPUAKA, LB Took charge of the middle last year, making a team-best 114 tackles, which ranked fifth in the ACC.

BRANDON FACYSON, CB Finally started a full season last fall after years of leg/foot problems. The rangy corner led the team with 11 pass breakups.

KEY LOSSES

JEROD EVANS, QB Set single-season school records in total offense (4,392), passing yards (3,546) and TDs responsible for (41) before bolting for the NFL.

ISAIAH FORD, WR Another early NFL departure, he left Virginia Tech as the school leader in catches (210), receiving yards (2,967) and receiving touchdowns (24).

BUCKY HODGES, TE The 6'7" mismatch declared for the NFL after catching 20 touchdowns in three years as a tight end/wide receiver.

RISING STAR

Trevon Hill started two games last year because of injuries and had 2.5 sacks in those contests, but the Hokies expect even more out of the 6'3", 240-pound sophomore defensive end in a full-time role. He could be Tech's most disruptive edge rusher.

THE VERDICT

2017 PROJECTION: 9-3, 5-3 ACC

Justin Fuente's track record of developing quarterbacks will be put to the test once again. Jerod Evans left Blacksburg after just one year, leaving three quarterbacks vying for the starting job. In addition to replacing Evans, the Hokies lost standout receivers Isaiah Ford and Bucky Hodges. Josh Jackson is the favorite to start at quarterback, but the redshirt freshman won't have to carry this team with a shutdown defense in place. Bud Foster's group allowed only 22.8 points per game last season and could be even better in 2017. The Hokies face early tests against West Virginia and Clemson but won't play Miami and Georgia Tech until November. The timing of those critical ACC contests is huge for an offense breaking in a new quarterback and playmakers at receiver. **Postseason: TaxSlayer Bowl vs. Mississippi State**



OUTSIDE THE HUDDLE

LOCK HIM DOWN How pleased was the school's administration with Justin Fuente's first year at Virginia Tech? It rewarded him with a two-year contract extension that runs through 2023 and bumps his pay to \$4 million per year by the end of the deal. Not a bad reward for someone only 16 months on the job.

DUST OFF THE TROPHY Virginia Tech renews acquaintances with former Big East rival West Virginia in the season opener at FedEx Field in Landover, Md. The schools, which met annually from 1973-2005, put a decade-plus hold on the series when the rivalry got a little too heated (and conference realignment complicated matters). But the Black Diamond Trophy will be up for grabs again this year before returning to campus sites in a home-and-home in 2021 and '22.

DEVIL OF A DEFENDER After getting some playing time as a receiver as a true freshman last fall, Divine Deablo figured to stick there this year, especially given Tech's need at the position. But the Hokies, impressed by his tenaciousness on special teams last fall and perhaps underwhelmed by his receiving chops, moved him to free safety in the spring. "I think that's a natural fit for him," Fuente says.

POWER OF 25 Fuente honored former coach Frank Beamer by awarding the No. 25 — Beamer's number in his playing days — to a different special teams player every week last year. The distinction caught on quickly, with players eagerly vying for the honor by standing out at practice.

OFFENSIVE FIREWORKS How much of a change of pace was Fuente's offense in his first year in Blacksburg? The Hokies scored 490 points, a single-season school record, and tallied 61 total touchdowns, tied with the 2000 and '03 teams for most in school history.

TEAM INFORMATION

HEAD COACH

Justin Fuente

RECORD AT SCHOOL

10-4 (1 year)

CAREER RECORD

36-27 (5 years)

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Brad Cornelsen

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

Bud Foster

LOCATION

Blacksburg, VA

STADIUM

Lane Stadium (65,632)

5-YEAR WIN TREND



LB **TREMAINE EDMUNDS**



OFFENSIVE LINEMEN The experience this year moves from the right side to the left, where Yosuah Nijman and Wyatt Teller join center Eric Gallo to give the Hokies 69 games of starting experience. The powerful Teller is Tech's best offensive line prospect since NFL mainstay Duane Brown, provided he can cut down on penalties, and Nijman is a prototypical left tackle. Questions persist on the right side, where Tyrell Smith, Braxton Pfaff, Parker Osterloh or Kyle Chung figure to occupy the two spots up for grabs. Overall, the group still hasn't arrived but is in better shape than it has been.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN It's a changing of the guard on the D-line, with the last two graduating classes having turned over five All-ACC honorees. Their replacements are young but skilled, all

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (5)

| | | | |
|-------|------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| WR 5 | Cam Phillips (Sr.) | 12 | Henri Murphy (Jr.) |
| WR 83 | Eric Kumah (So.) | 8 | Phil Patterson (Fr.) |
| LT 69 | Yosuah Nijman (Jr.) | 71 | T.J. Jackson (Fr.) |
| LG 57 | Wyatt Teller (Sr.) | 61 | Kyle Chung (Sr.) |
| C 64 | Eric Gallo (Sr.) | 75 | Zachariah Hoyt (Fr.) |
| RG 74 | Braxton Pfaff (Jr.) | 67 | Parker Osterloh (Sr.) |
| RT 79 | Tyrell Smith (So.) | 62 | D'Andre Plantin (So.) |
| TE 85 | Chris Cunningham (So.) | 80 | Colt Pettit (So.) |
| HB 29 | Dalton Keene (Fr.) | | Drake Deluiliis (Fr.) |
| QB 17 | Josh Jackson (Fr.) | 6 | A.J. Bush (Jr.) |
| RB 34 | Travon McMillian (Jr.) | 32 | Steven Peoples (Jr.) |

DEFENSE (7)

| | | | |
|--------|-------------------------|----|------------------------|
| DE 94 | Trevon Hill (So.) | 40 | Emmanuel Belmar (Fr.) |
| DT 4 | Tim Settle (So.) | 55 | Jarrod Hewitt (Fr.) |
| DE 8 | Ricky Walker (Jr.) | 47 | Darius Fullwood (So.) |
| DT 99 | Vinny Mihota (Jr.) | 11 | Houshun Gaines (So.) |
| OLB 6 | Mook Reynolds (Jr.) | 24 | Anthony Shegog (Sr.) |
| ILB 54 | Andrew Motuapuaka (Sr.) | 14 | Tavante Beckett (So.) |
| ILB 49 | Tremaine Edmunds (Jr.) | 56 | Sean Huelskamp (Sr.) |
| CB 31 | Brandon Facyson (Sr.) | 26 | Jovonn Quillen (So.) |
| CB 3 | Greg Stroman (Sr.) | 36 | Adonis Alexander (Jr.) |
| SS 21 | Reggie Floyd (So.) | | Devon Hunter (Fr.) |
| FS 22 | Terrell Edmunds (Jr.) | 17 | Divine Deablo (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|----------------------|-------|--------------------|
| K 46 | Joey Slye (Sr.) | KR 3 | Greg Stroman (Sr.) |
| P 91 | Oscar Bradburn (Fr.) | PR 12 | Henri Murphy (Jr.) |

played six of the seven quarterbacks who were invited to be part of this spring's Jon Gruden Quarterback Camp, and they still were tied for 14th nationally in pass efficiency defense. Everyone but Chuck Clark is back, with Terrell Edmunds sliding over from rover to replace him at the more play-calling-intensive free safety spot. The returning cornerback trio of Brandon Facyson, Greg Stroman and Adonis Alexander worked well last year, helping Tech intercept 16 passes, second most in the ACC. Sophomore Reggie Floyd worked at rover in the spring, but that could also be an entry point for stud recruit Devon Hunter, who's been compared physically to former Tech standout Kam Chancellor. This is a typical ball-hawking Hokies secondary.

SPECIALISTS Four-year placekicker Joey Slye should pass Shayne Graham as the Hokies' all-time leading scorer sometime in the first half of the season, although his strong leg still hasn't produced a 50-yard field goal in eight attempts. Aussie Oscar Bradburn is expected to take over the punting job as a true freshman. His only experience is in Australian rules football, but he comes from the same kicking camp that's produced the last four Ray Guy Award winners. Stroman's a threat to take every punt to the house, and kick returns got a boost from Murphy late last year.

Scouting the HOKIES

OPPOSING COACHES SIZE UP VIRGINIA TECH

"[Justin] Fuente has a really diverse offense that is very hard to defend. They'll throw more formations, more plays at you than you see against most teams, and they'll try to do things that people did to you on film that they thought worked and you haven't prepared for. He has that ability to put in new stuff every week to keep you off-balance.

... I was surprised the quarterback (Jerod Evans) went to the draft. He could have been really good coming back in that system, so I'm not sure what they'll look like offensively. They lose most of their high-end skill guys, so we'll see. I hope it takes them a year or two to reload. I know they signed a junior college quarterback for this year and a high school guy that enrolled mid-year, so I'm sure he's going to have a similar plan and try to keep the QB run game involved. ... Defensively, they're always one of the most aggressive schemes we see. They're losing everyone up front, so that will be a different deal. ... They have a great atmosphere there. I've coached in a lot of leagues, and they probably have as good a home-field advantage as you'll find just about anywhere outside the SEC."

ADVANCED STATS

5 FACTORS: COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S MOST IMPORTANT STATS

| FIELD POSITION ¹ | RANK |
|-----------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE | 33.7 |
| DEFENSE | 28.2 |
| MARGIN | +5.5 |

| EFFICIENCY ² | RANK |
|-------------------------|-------|
| OFFENSE | 43.3% |
| DEFENSE | 34.8% |
| MARGIN | +8.5% |

| EXPLOSIVENESS ³ | RANK |
|----------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE | 5.7 |
| DEFENSE | 5.0 |
| MARGIN | +0.7 |

| FINISHING DRIVES ⁴ | RANK |
|-------------------------------|------|
| OFFENSE | 4.4 |
| DEFENSE | 4.2 |
| MARGIN | +0.2 |

| ADJUSTED T.O. MARGIN ⁵ | RANK |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| PROJECTED | 1.4 |
| ACTUAL | -1 |
| MARGIN | -2.4 |

KEY: 1-Average starting field position by yard line; 2-Rate of successful plays (gaining 50% of necessary yards on 1st down, 70% on 2nd down, 100% on 3rd down); 3-Explosiveness—yards per play; 4-Points per trip inside 40-yard line; 5-T.O. margin accounting for "luck." Advanced stats provided by Bill Connelly of SB Nation

NUMBERS TO KNOW

+8.5 The Hokies had a success rate of 43.3 percent and allowed a success rate of 34.8 percent. The resulting plus-8.5 percent margin was 16th in the country, albeit just fourth in the hyper-efficient ACC.

2.2 Big plays are get-out-of-jail-free cards. They mean you don't have to be quite as efficient. The Tech offense was less than elite in this regard. Their 2.2 gains per game of 30-plus yards ranked 69th in FBS, and their 1.2 passes of 20-plus ranked 86th.

+5.5 The Hokies' average drive started at the 33.7, the eighth-best figure in the country. Combined with an average of 28.2 on defense, Tech created a plus-5.5 yard field-position margin, 15th in the country and best in the ACC.

2017 VIRGINIA TECH ROSTER



| QUARTERBACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 6 Bush, A.J. | 6-4/219 | Jr. | Alpharetta, GA |
| 11 Click, Jack | 6-3/218 | So. | Glen Allen, VA |
| 2 Hooker, Hendon | 6-4/196 | Fr. | Greensboro, NC |
| 17 Jackson, Josh | 6-1/211 | Fr. | Ann Arbor, MI |
| 18 Mummau, Chase | 6-2/183 | Fr. | Mechanicsville, VA |
| 5 Willis, Ryan | 6-4/211 | Jr. | Overland Park, KS |

| RUNNING BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|----------|-----|----------------|
| 16 Fox, Coleman | 5-11/193 | So. | Salem, VA |
| 33 McCleave, Deshaun | 5-9/180 | So. | Chesapeake, VA |
| 34 McMillian, Travon | 6-0/205 | Jr. | Woodbridge, VA |
| 32 Peoples, Steven | 5-9/218 | Jr. | Galax, VA |
| 48 Reid, D.J. | 6-1/235 | Jr. | Chester, VA |
| 41 Skeens, Trey | 5-11/216 | So. | Wytheville, VA |
| 44 Wheatley, Terius | 6-0/185 | Fr. | Ann Arbor, MI |

| RECEIVERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|----------|-----|----------------------|
| 27 Benson, Dominic | 6-2/183 | Fr. | Woodbridge, VA |
| 86 Carroll, C.J. | 5-8/167 | Jr. | Olney, MD |
| Clark, James | 5-10/185 | Sr. | New Smyrna Beach, FL |
| 39 Daniel, Sean | 5-9/183 | So. | Chesapeake, VA |
| 81 Denmark, Samuel | 6-0/183 | Fr. | Huger, SC |
| 41 Henry, Kevin | 5-10/165 | Fr. | Greensboro, NC |
| 30 Jefferson, Jordan | 5-8/170 | Fr. | Goochland, VA |
| 83 Kumah, Eric | 6-2/210 | So. | Woodbridge, VA |
| 87 Long, Bodhie | 6-3/200 | Fr. | Richmond, VA |
| 12 Murphy, Henri | 5-10/175 | Jr. | Pine Bluff, AR |
| 8 Patterson, Phil | 6-2/180 | Fr. | Virginia Beach, VA |
| 5 Phillips, Cam | 6-0/199 | Sr. | Laurel, MD |
| 88 Pimpleton, Kalil | 5-8/153 | Fr. | Muskegon, MI |

| TIGHT ENDS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|---------|-----|-------------------|
| 42 Blaker, Cole | 6-2/200 | Fr. | Narrows, VA |
| 43 Burke, Xavier | 6-3/255 | So. | Lawrenceville, VA |
| 85 Cunningham, Chris | 6-2/236 | So. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 80 Harman, Casey | 6-3/245 | So. | Swords Creek, VA |
| 29 Keene, Dalton | 6-4/225 | Fr. | Littleton, CO |
| 80 Pettit, Colt | 6-3/298 | So. | Deshler, OH |

| OFFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|------------------------|---------|-----|-----------------------|
| 63 Bailey, Daniel | 6-3/301 | So. | Abingdon, VA |
| 52 Cannon, Austin | 6-2/302 | Fr. | Mechanicsville, VA |
| 65 Christ, Matt | 6-3/274 | So. | Sterling, VA |
| 61 Chung, Kyle | 6-3/290 | Sr. | Ponte Vedra Beach, FL |
| 60 Dzansi, Silas | 6-5/310 | Fr. | Woodbridge, VA |
| 64 Gallo, Eric | 6-2/295 | Sr. | Richboro, PA |
| 76 Hopple, Jarrett | 6-2/293 | Fr. | Suffolk, VA |
| 75 Hoyt, Zachariah | 6-5/285 | Fr. | Salem, VA |
| 71 Jackson, T.J. | 6-6/324 | Fr. | Cumberland, VA |
| 50 Kearns, Patrick | 6-5/288 | Fr. | Adairsville, GA |
| 68 Kish, Connor | 6-2/280 | Fr. | Oceanside, CA |
| 70 Kish, Kevin | 6-2/286 | So. | Oceanside, CA |
| 66 Mitchell, Billy Ray | 6-4/285 | Jr. | Westwood, NJ |
| 77 Moore, Demetri | 6-6/303 | Jr. | Fairborn, OH |
| 69 Nijman, Yosuah | 6-7/300 | Jr. | Maplewood, NJ |

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------|-----|------------------|
| 67 Osterloh, Parker | 6-8/326 | Sr. | Williamsburg, VA |
| 74 Pfaff, Braxton | 6-5/293 | Jr. | Lynchburg, VA |
| 62 Plantin, D'Andre | 6-5/295 | So. | Norcross, GA |
| 79 Smith, Tyrell | 6-3/295 | So. | N. Brunswick, NJ |
| 57 Teller, Wyatt | 6-5/308 | Sr. | Beaeton, VA |

| DEFENSIVE LINEMEN | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|---------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|
| 40 Belmar, Emmanuel | 6-2/228 | Fr. | Suwanee, GA |
| 47 Fullwood, Darius | 6-3/252 | So. | College Park, MD |
| 11 Gaines, Houshun | 6-3/248 | So. | Rocky Mount, NC |
| 55 Hewitt, Jarrod | 6-1/299 | Fr. | Venice, FL |
| 94 Hill, Trevon | 6-3/240 | So. | Virginia Beach, VA |
| 99 Mihota, Vinny | 6-5/264 | Jr. | Fredericksburg, VA |
| 4 Settle, Tim | 6-3/328 | So. | Manassas, VA |
| 96 Taylor, Jimmie | 6-2/240 | Fr. | Jacksonville, NC |
| 8 Walker, Ricky | 6-2/282 | Jr. | Hampton, VA |

| LINEBACKERS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|-----------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 14 Beckett, Tavante | 5-10/214 | So. | Chesapeake, VA |
| 49 Edmunds, Tremaine | 6-5/236 | Jr. | Danville, VA |
| 48 Griffith, Daniel | 6-0/216 | Fr. | Suffolk, VA |
| 56 Huelskamp, Sean | 6-1/222 | Sr. | Centreville, VA |
| 38 Kearney, Rico | 6-0/219 | Fr. | Jacksonville, FL |
| 61 Koshuta, Joe | 6-1/255 | So. | Vienna, VA |
| 18 Minor, Raymon | 6-2/231 | Jr. | Ashland, VA |
| 54 Motuapuaka, Andrew | 6-0/233 | Sr. | Virginia Beach, VA |
| 6 Reynolds, Mook | 6-0/183 | Jr. | Greensboro, NC |
| 24 Shegog, Anthony | 6-2/213 | Sr. | Stafford, VA |
| 58 Treser, Zack | 6-5/225 | So. | Blacksburg, VA |
| 53 Young, Trent | 5-10/214 | Jr. | Richmond, VA |

| DEFENSIVE BACKS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|----------------------|----------|-----|--------------------|
| 36 Alexander, Adonis | 6-3/193 | Jr. | Charlotte, NC |
| 42 Boyd, Elisha | 6-2/185 | Jr. | Newport News, VA |
| 17 Deablo, Divine | 6-3/208 | So. | Winston-Salem, NC |
| 22 Edmunds, Terrell | 6-2/210 | Jr. | Danville, VA |
| 31 Facyson, Brandon | 6-2/197 | Sr. | Newman, GA |
| 13 Farley, Caleb | 6-2/180 | Fr. | Hickory, NC |
| 21 Floyd, Reggie | 6-0/205 | So. | Manassas, VA |
| 41 Jennings, John | 5-11/165 | Jr. | Clifton, VA |
| 9 Ladler, Khalil | 5-11/183 | Fr. | Stone Mountain, GA |
| 20 Newsome, Deon | 5-11/193 | Sr. | Hampton, VA |
| 27 Payne, Shawn | 6-3/192 | Jr. | Chesterfield, VA |
| 26 Quillen, Jovonn | 6-0/176 | So. | Hampton, VA |
| 2 Rodgers, Tyree | 6-1/173 | Fr. | Camden, NJ |
| 29 Seisay, Ishmiel | 5-9/197 | So. | Springfield, VA |
| 3 Stroman, Greg | 6-0/180 | Sr. | Bristow, VA |
| 39 Thornton, Tyrone | 5-9/193 | So. | Boston, MA |

| SPECIALISTS | HT/WT | CL | HOMETOWN |
|--------------------------|----------|-----|-------------------|
| 91 Bradburn, Oscar (P) | 6-1/191 | Fr. | Sydney, Australia |
| 93 Johnson, Brian (P) | 6-1/161 | Fr. | Washington, DC |
| 51 McCurry, Hundley (LS) | 5-11/190 | Fr. | Summersville, SC |
| 95 Moon, Chaska (LS) | 5-10/227 | So. | Wake Forest, NC |
| 46 Slye, Joey (K) | 5-11/210 | Sr. | Stafford, VA |
| 87 Taylor, Colton (LS) | 6-1/220 | Sr. | Salem, VA |

2016 RESULTS

RECORD: 10-4, 6-2 ACC

| | | | |
|----------|-------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | Liberty | W | 36-13 |
| Sept. 10 | vs. Tennessee # | L | 24-45 |
| Sept. 17 | Boston College | W | 49-0 |
| Sept. 24 | East Carolina | W | 54-17 |
| Oct. 8 | at North Carolina | W | 34-3 |
| Oct. 15 | at Syracuse | L | 17-31 |
| Oct. 20 | Miami | W | 37-16 |
| Oct. 27 | at Pittsburgh | W | 39-36 |
| Nov. 5 | at Duke | W | 24-21 |
| Nov. 12 | Georgia Tech | L | 20-30 |
| Nov. 19 | at Notre Dame | W | 34-31 |
| Nov. 26 | Virginia | W | 52-10 |
| Dec. 3 | vs. Clemson % | L | 35-42 |
| Dec. 29 | vs. Arkansas \$ | W | 35-24 |

#Bristol %Orlando \$Belk Bowl



CAM PHILLIPS

2016 INDIVIDUAL STATS

| PASSING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | INT |
|-------------------|-----|-------|-------|----|-----|
| Jerod Evans | 422 | 268 | 3,546 | 29 | 8 |
| RUSHING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Jerod Evans | 204 | 846 | 4.1 | 12 | |
| Travon McMillian | 145 | 671 | 4.6 | 7 | |
| Sam Rogers | 67 | 283 | 4.2 | 2 | |
| Marshawn Williams | 59 | 244 | 4.1 | 2 | |
| Cam Phillips | 30 | 140 | 4.7 | 0 | |
| RECEIVING | ATT | YDS | AVG | TD | |
| Isaiah Ford | 79 | 1,094 | 13.8 | 7 | |
| Cam Phillips | 76 | 983 | 12.9 | 5 | |
| Bucky Hodges | 48 | 691 | 14.4 | 7 | |
| Sam Rogers | 24 | 301 | 12.5 | 4 | |

KICKING: Joey Slye, 20-27 FGs, 58-59 XPs, 118 points

TACKLES: Andrew Motuapuaka, 114; Tremaine Edmunds, 106

SACKS: Ken Ekanem, 7.5

INTERCEPTIONS: Terrell Edmunds, 4

Players returning in Bold

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 35.0 ppg | 5 | 33 |
| Rushing | 183.1 ypg | 5 | 55 |
| Passing | 261.9 ypg | 7 | 35 |
| Total | 444.9 ypg | 5 | 39 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 22.8 ppg | 5 | 28 |
| Rushing | 140.5 ypg | 8 | 32 |
| Passing | 200.2 ypg | 3 | 26 |
| Total | 340.7 ypg | 4 | 18 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | ACC | NATIONAL |
| -1 | -0.07 | 9 | 72 |

2017 SIGNEES

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----|----------|--------------------|
| Rayshard Ashby | LB | 5-11/230 | Chesterfield, VA |
| Oscar Bradburn | P | 6-2/190 | Sydney, Australia |
| Aiden Brown | OL | 6-3/285 | Silver Spring, MD |
| A.J. Bush | QB | 6-4/220 | Atlanta, GA |
| Christian Darrisaw | OL | 6-4/299 | Upper Marlboro, MD |
| Zion Debose | DE | 6-3/230 | Salisbury, NC |
| Drake Deluiliis | TE | 6-5/220 | Charlotte, NC |
| Silas Dzansi | OL | 6-6/295 | Woodbridge, VA |
| Caleb Farley | ATH | 6-3/185 | Hickory, NC |
| TyJuan Garbutt | DE | 6-3/220 | Fredericksburg, VA |
| J'Brit Glaze | DL | 6-4/270 | Tampa, FL |
| Jaylen Griffin | LB | 6-2/230 | Rome, GA |
| Hezekiah Grimsley | WR | 6-0/180 | Williamsburg, VA |
| Jalen Holston | RB | 6-0/220 | Stockbridge, GA |
| Hendon Hooker | QB | 6-4/196 | Greensboro, NC |
| Devon Hunter | DB | 6-2/215 | Chesapeake, VA |
| Rico Kearney | LB | 6-0/220 | Jacksonville, FL |
| Dalton Keene | TE | 6-5/228 | Littleton, CO |
| Kalil Pimpleton | WR | 5-7/165 | Muskegon, MI |
| Robert Porcher IV | DE | 6-3/255 | Orlando, FL |
| Nathan Proctor | DE | 6-3/230 | Indian Head, MD |
| Dylan Rivers | LB | 6-3/230 | Sherando, VA |
| Sean Savoy | WR | 5-11/180 | Washington, DC |
| Devante Smith | DB | 6-0/190 | Manassas, VA |
| Lecitus Smith | TE | 6-4/260 | Fitzgerald, GA |
| Bryce Watts | DB | 6-1/185 | Toms River, NJ |
| Terius Wheatley | ATH | 5-11/195 | Ann Arbor, MI |

Virginia Tech closed strong, particularly on defense, landing big-time commitments from in-state prospects safety Devon Hunter, linebacker Dylan Rivers and end TyJuan Garbutt, all of whom were four-star recruits or better and ranked in the top 10 in Virginia. Add end Nathan Proctor, one of five D-linemen in the group, and Bud Foster filled some needs. But so did the offense. Justin Fuente nabbed two QBs: A.J. Bush from the junior college ranks and 6'4" dual threat Hendon Hooker from high school. He also added an array of playmakers, from small, shifty receivers Kalil Pimpleton and Sean Savoy to big, versatile tight end/H-backs Dalton Keene and Drake Deluiliis, to running backs Jalen Holston and junior college transfer Terius Wheatley. All of them could get early playing time.



CHARLOTTE 49ERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: 126 • C-USA EAST PREDICTION: 7 • PROJECTED RECORD: 3-9, 1-7 C-USA

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|---------------------|
| Sept. 2 | at Eastern Michigan |
| Sept. 9 | at Kansas State |
| Sept. 16 | North Carolina A&T |
| Sept. 23 | Georgia State |
| Sept. 30 | at FIU |
| Oct. 7 | Marshall |
| Oct. 14 | at Western Kentucky |
| Oct. 21 | UAB |
| Nov. 4 | at Old Dominion |
| Nov. 11 | Middle Tennessee |
| Nov. 18 | at Southern Miss |
| Nov. 25 | Florida Atlantic |

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 4-8, 3-5 C-USA

| | | | |
|----------|---------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 1 | at Louisville | L | 14-70 |
| Sept. 10 | Elon | W | 47-14 |
| Sept. 17 | Eastern Michigan | L | 19-37 |
| Sept. 24 | at Temple | L | 20-48 |
| Oct. 1 | Old Dominion | L | 17-52 |
| Oct. 9 | at Florida Atlantic | W | 28-23 |
| Oct. 15 | FIU | L | 26-27 |
| Oct. 22 | at Marshall | W | 27-24 |
| Nov. 5 | at Southern Miss | W | 38-27 |
| Nov. 12 | Rice | L | 21-22 |
| Nov. 19 | Middle Tennessee | L | 31-38 |
| Nov. 26 | at UTSA | L | 14-33 |

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Kameron Duncan, RB, Ocala, FL
2. Chrishawn Wilson, DL, Florence, SC
3. D'Mitri Emmanuel, OL, Waxhaw, NC
4. Cameron Bent, WR, Bluffton, SC
5. Victor Tucker, WR, Opa Locka, FL
6. Michael Adams, DT, Summerville, GA
7. Jonathan Francois, LB, Hialeah, FL
8. Mic Roof, QB, Duluth, GA
9. Marquavis Gibbs, DB, West Palm Beach, FL*
10. DeAnthony O'Neill, LB/DE, Tallahassee, FL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | C-USA | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-------|----------|
| Scoring | 25.2 ppg | 11 | 94 |
| Rushing | 176.8 ypg | 6 | 60 |
| Passing | 192.8 ypg | 12 | 98 |
| Total | 369.5 ypg | 10 | 101 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | C-USA | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 34.6 ppg | 7 | 102 |
| Rushing | 143.4 ypg | 2 | 35 |
| Passing | 309.8 ypg | 13 | 124 |
| Total | 453.3 ypg | 10 | 105 |

| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | C-USA | NATIONAL |
|-----------|----------|-------|----------|
| +7 | +0.58 | 2 | 23 |

STAT CORNER

.500

Charlotte's win over Southern Miss was its first ever over an FBS team that finished above .500. The 49ers are 1-9 vs. such teams.

OFFENSE While Charlotte's season ended on a down note — the 49ers lost their last three games — at least coach Brad Lambert found a quarterback. After stepping into the starting role midway through the year, North Carolina A&T transfer Hasaan Klugh made the job his own, accounting for 15 total touchdowns in the final seven games. Lambert says that after a strong spring, the junior solidified his status as one of the team's most effective leaders. After missing last season with a back injury, junior Brooks Barden will give Klugh an experienced backup.

Klugh will have the benefit of a deep group of tested receivers, led by senior T.L. Ford and junior Workpeh Kofa. The 49ers, however, need to establish a deep threat; neither Ford nor Kofa averaged more than 12.2 yards per reception last season.

"We've got some age there, some experience. We're kind of leaning on that group," Lambert says.

But there are pressing questions elsewhere. Sophomore running backs Robert Washington and Benny LeMay — as well as converted linebacker Markevis Davis — will try to fill the void left by former All-Conference USA pick Kalif Phillips. And along the offensive line there is some experience, but scant continuity. Don't be surprised if they work some junior college pickups into the rotation.

With Greg Adkins brought in to handle the offensive line and coordinate the running game, it'll feel like a fresh start for this piece of the offense.

DEFENSE Two-thirds of last season's solid defensive front are gone. While Larry Ogunjobi's and Brandon Banks' absences will be felt, Lambert says he's excited to see what sophomore Randy Suydam, junior Tyler Fain and senior Nick Carroll can do in their place. Charlotte had the luxury of redshirting a handful of defensive linemen last season. This year, they'll have to grow up quickly as they'll be pressed into service early in a unit in need of depth.

Senior Karrington King will have to pick up the slack from the departure of fellow linebacker Nick Cook, last season's leading tackler. Expect veteran outside linebackers Jeff Gemmell and Tyriq Harris to build on productive 2016 campaigns. While there are questions to be answered at linebacker, Lambert believes that the 49ers have the raw materials to be strong there.

There are solid options in the secondary as sophomores AJ McDonald and Ben DeLuca return at safety and Robert Cheatem and Marquavis Gibbs are expected to make an impact in their first run at cornerback alongside veterans Anthony Covington and Denzel Irvin. The 49ers gave up 309.8 yards per game through the air last season, so improvement here will be a welcome sight.

SPECIALISTS Senior Arthur Hart is locked in at punter after averaging 39.2 yards per kick last season. But the kicking job is wide open. Both of last season's kickers are gone, leaving redshirt freshman Kyle Corbett, sophomore Jackson Vansickle and others to figure it out.

FINAL ANALYSIS Charlotte's third season in FBS and fifth overall will feel strange since it's the first without the 19 players who made it through from the program's initial recruiting class. So not only is the group trying to fill some major holes on the field, but it's also trying to find its identity off of it.

Last season's four wins doubled the output from the year before. And with three losses coming by a touchdown or less, that improvement could have been steeper. But this season, Charlotte will likely need to keep its expectations in check. While the 49ers have potential, they'll also likely need to draw on plenty of patience.



KARRINGTON KING

"Those guys have a shot at building something good. It takes time to build it, but it's a great area, and I love their stadium."

— An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

| | | | |
|-------|------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| WR 17 | Mark Quattlebaum (Jr.) | 4 | Chris Montgomery (Sr.) |
| WR 5 | T.L. Ford II (Sr.) | 9 | Uriah LeMay (Sr.) |
| WR 6 | Workpeh Kofa (Jr.) | 81 | Trent Bostick (Sr.) |
| LT 51 | Chris Brown (Jr.) | 79 | Josh Snapper (So.) |
| LG 77 | Wolfgang Zacherl (Sr.) | 69 | Luke Prevette (Fr.) |
| C 60 | Darren Drake (Jr.) | 68 | Jaelin Fisher (Fr.) |
| RG 64 | Nate Davis (Jr.) | 78 | Trevor Stacy (So.) |
| RT 75 | Eugene German (Sr.) | 71 | Cameron Clark (So.) |
| TE 88 | R.J. Tyler (Jr.) | 85 | Ryan Carriere (Fr.) |
| QB 7 | Hasaan Klugh (Jr.) | 12 | Brooks Barden (Jr.) |
| RB 32 | Benny LeMay (So.) | 20 | Robert Washington (So.) |

DEFENSE (6)

| | | | |
|--------|-----------------------|----|-------------------------|
| DE 91 | Nick Carroll (Sr.) | 52 | Zach Duncan (Jr.) |
| DT 62 | Tyler Fain (Jr.) | 99 | Jon Hardy (So.) |
| DE 56 | Randy Suydam (So.) | 57 | Austin Paraison (Fr.) |
| OLB 34 | Jeff Gemmell (So.) | 30 | Darius Irvin (So.) |
| ILB 17 | Anthony Butler (So.) | 44 | Cam Darley (Jr.) |
| ILB 50 | Karrington King (Sr.) | 32 | Sean Bernard (Jr.) |
| OLB 10 | Tyriq Harris (So.) | 46 | Alex Highsmith (So.) |
| CB 15 | Marquavis Gibbs (So.) | 23 | Anthony Covington (Sr.) |
| CB 36 | Robert Cheatem (Fr.) | 25 | Denzel Irvin (Jr.) |
| SS 41 | AJ McDonald (So.) | 11 | Ed Rolle (Jr.) |
| FS 28 | Ben DeLuca (So.) | 12 | Alex Duncan (Jr.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|--------------------|-------|------------------------|
| P 39 | Kyle Corbett (Fr.) | KR 4 | Chris Montgomery (Sr.) |
| K 40 | Arthur Hart (Sr.) | PR 83 | Nate Mullen (So.) |

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Hasaan Klugh, 224-120-1,356-3, 10 TDs
Rushing: Robert Washington, 97 att., 489 yds., 5 TDs
Receiving: T.L. Ford II, 36 rec., 430 yds., 4 TDs
Tackles: Karrington King, 73
Sacks: Karrington King, 2.0; Tyriq Harris, 2.0
Interceptions: Ed Rolle, 3

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Brad Lambert
Record at School: 16-30 (4 years)
Career Record: 16-30 (4 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jeff Mullen
Defensive Coordinator: Matt Wallerstedt
 Charlotte, NC • Jerry Richardson Stadium (15,314)



COASTAL CAROLINA CHANTICLEERS

NATIONAL FORECAST: 124 • SUN BELT PREDICTION: 10 • PROJECTED RECORD: 4-8, 2-6 SUN BELT

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|----------------------|
| Sept. 2 | Massachusetts |
| Sept. 16 | at UAB |
| Sept. 23 | Western Illinois |
| Sept. 30 | at UL Monroe |
| Oct. 7 | Georgia State |
| Oct. 14 | at Arkansas State |
| Oct. 21 | at Appalachian State |
| Oct. 28 | Texas State |
| Nov. 4 | at Arkansas |
| Nov. 11 | Troy |
| Nov. 18 | at Idaho |
| Dec. 2 | Georgia Southern |

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-2

| | | | |
|----------|----------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | at Lamar | W | 38-14 |
| Sept. 10 | Florida A&M | W | 49-10 |
| Sept. 17 | at Jacksonville St. | L | 26-27 |
| Sept. 24 | Furman | W | 41-21 |
| Oct. 1 | Charleston So. (2ot) | L | 58-59 |
| Oct. 15 | at Gardner-Webb | W | 17-7 |
| Oct. 22 | Central Conn. St. | W | 33-25 |
| Oct. 29 | at Presbyterian | W | 48-17 |
| Nov. 5 | Monmouth | W | 38-17 |
| Nov. 12 | Bryant | W | 31-21 |
| Nov. 17 | Liberty | W | 42-7 |
| Nov. 26 | Hampton | W | 26-7 |

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Tay Pringle, DT, Cayce, SC
2. Jack Franklin, OL, Buford, GA
3. Seth Harrell, OL, Chesapeake, VA
4. Cantorian Weems, DB, Snellville, GA
5. Michael Makins, LB, Lithonia, GA
6. Darius Harper, QB, Knoxville, TN
7. E.J. Porter, LB, Atlantic Beach, FL
8. Jave Brown, DB, Franklin, NJ*
9. Antwine Loper, OL, Conway, SC
10. Jeffrey Gunter, DE, Durham, NC

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME |
|---------|-----------|
| Scoring | 37.2 ppg |
| Rushing | 254.3 ypg |
| Passing | 133.3 ypg |
| Total | 387.7 ypg |

| DEFENSE | PER GAME |
|---------|-----------|
| Scoring | 19.3 ppg |
| Rushing | 123.7 ypg |
| Passing | 208.1 ypg |
| Total | 331.8 ypg |

| TO MARGIN | PER GAME |
|-----------|----------|
| +11 | +0.92 |

STAT CORNER

101

Coastal ranked 101st in Jeff Sagarin's Division I rankings in 2016. That would have placed the Chanticleers fifth in the Sun Belt.

OFFENSE As Coastal Carolina moves up to the FBS level after 14 seasons as an FCS member, the team is searching for stability at quarterback. Despite going 10-2 playing a full FCS schedule in 2016, the Chanticleers used six quarterbacks (seven if you count one who went down before the season) due to injury. Graduate transfer Austin Wilson may be the one-season answer. He had limited action in nine games with Syracuse from 2014-16, completing 49-of-85 passes for 418 yards with one touchdown and seven interceptions. Josh Stille, who won the starting job as a sophomore in 2016 but was lost for the season with a knee injury in the third game, is another option.

The Chanticleers must replace the school's all-time leading rusher, De'Angelo Henderson, and four productive members of the offensive line. Senior Osharmar Abercrombie, with 1,198 career yards, is next in line to be the featured back. CCU has some talented receivers, but they are untested because the team threw little in 2016 due to the quarterback injuries. The top returner is senior Chris Jones (22 receptions for 323 yards).

Jamey Chadwell, previously the head coach at Charleston Southern, replaces Dave Patenaude as the offensive coordinator. He's expected to run a spread option attack.

DEFENSE Coastal has more stability on defense, although it must replace most of its defensive backfield and All-America linebacker Alex Searce, who finished sixth in the voting for the Buck Buchanan FCS Defensive Player of the Year Award. The leader of the defense will be linebacker Shane Johnson, who was second on the team with 66 total tackles last season despite missing two games to injury. A lot will be expected from sophomore linebacker Laqavious Paul, who impressed in limited action as a freshman.

Pass-rushing defensive ends Myles White and Marcus Williamson return after combining for 15.5 tackles for a loss last season. The middle of the 4-3 front will be manned by tackles Ja'ree Tolbert and Dwayne Price, who combined for 47 tackles in 2016. While CCU's offensive line has the size to compete at the FBS level, the defense will be undersized with a projected starting front four that averages just over 250 pounds. This group will have to rely on quickness.

Coastal Carolina intercepted 21 passes in 2016 with a more aggressive defensive philosophy under first-year coordinator Mickey Matthews, the former head coach at James Madison. But those interceptions came with a very experienced secondary. Junior cornerback Anthony Chesley is the only returning player who had more than one of the picks.

SPECIALISTS The Chants must replace reliable place-kicker Ryan Granger, who made 17-of-21 last season. Junior Masamitsu Ishibashi, who has been a kickoff specialist, is the likely replacement. Chris Jones and Ky'Jon Tyler are both dangerous in the return game.

FINAL ANALYSIS Coastal Carolina can compete for a Sun Belt Conference championship this season but won't be eligible for a bowl game until 2018, per NCAA transition rules. It would be unrealistic to expect the Chants to contend for a league title in their first FBS season, particularly with an undersized defense, but they have the coaching staff to succeed in the Sun Belt.

Head coach Joe Moglia, who returned to sidelines after more than two decades in the corporate world, has compiled a 51-15 record at CCU and won the 2015 Eddie Robinson FCS National Coach of the Year Award. In addition, Matthews is three-time National Coach of the Year, and Chadwell was being considered for other FBS jobs before being hired by CCU in January. This program is clearly under outstanding leadership.



OSHARMAR ABERCROMBIE

"We've seen other teams make the transition (from FCS) to the Sun Belt. They can be competitive right away."

— An opposing Sun Belt assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (3)

| | | | | |
|----|----|----------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| WR | 19 | Ky'Jon Tyler (So.) | 3 | Gary Bradshaw (Sr.) |
| WR | 8 | Chris Jones (Sr.) | 89 | Malcolm Williams (Jr.) |
| LT | 75 | Ethan Howard (So.) | 60 | Steven Bedosky (Fr.) |
| LG | 65 | Adam Lawhorn (Jr.) | 63 | Trey Carter (Fr.) |
| C | 59 | Jamarion McBride (Jr.) | 55 | Rodney Mitchell (Sr.) |
| RG | 71 | Jack Flood (Jr.) | 79 | Christopher Jones (Fr.) |
| RT | 72 | Peter Battaglia (So.) | 73 | Brock Merritt (Jr.) |
| TE | 88 | Laquay Brown (Jr.) | 47 | Maxwell Kjosja (So.) |
| QB | 10 | Austin Wilson (Sr.) | 6 | Josh Stille (Jr.) |
| RB | 32 | Osharmar Abercrombie (Sr.) | 33 | Alex James (So.) |
| RB | 21 | Marcus Outlow (Jr.) | 39 | Jah-Maine Martin (So.) |

DEFENSE (5)

| | | | | |
|-----|----|-------------------------|----|------------------------|
| DE | 46 | Myles White (So.) | 95 | Tarrol Stafford (Jr.) |
| DT | 93 | Ja'ree Tolbert (Jr.) | 52 | C.J. Brewer (Fr.) |
| DT | 90 | Dwayne Price (Sr.) | 98 | Jalen Washington (Jr.) |
| DE | 51 | Marcus Williamson (Sr.) | 97 | Tarron Jackson (Fr.) |
| OLB | 30 | Laqavious Paul (So.) | 38 | Jarius McMillan (Sr.) |
| ILB | 9 | Shane Johnson (Sr.) | 29 | Silas Kelly (Fr.) |
| OLB | 6 | Kerron Johnson (Sr.) | 41 | Michael Billings (Jr.) |
| CB | 17 | Anthony Chesley (Jr.) | 35 | Jacquez Hairston (So.) |
| CB | 2 | Dontay Hears (Sr.) | 28 | Johnathan Smith (Fr.) |
| S | 11 | Nicholas Clark (Sr.) | 1 | Eric Church (Sr.) |
| S | 33 | Allen Hall (Jr.) | 26 | Amir Howard (Fr.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | | | |
|---|----|---------------------------|----|----|--------------------|
| K | 95 | Masamitsu Ishibashi (Sr.) | KR | 19 | Ky'Jon Tyler (So.) |
| P | 35 | Evan Rabon (Jr.) | PR | 8 | Chris Jones (Sr.) |

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Tyler Keane, 105-67-809-2, 10 TDs
Rushing: Osharmar Abercrombie, 74 att., 396 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Chris Jones, 22 rec., 323 yds., 2 TDs
Tackles: Shane Johnson, 66
Sacks: Marcus Williamson, 3.5; Myles White, 3.5
Interceptions: Anthony Chesley, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Joe Moglia
Record at School: 51-15 (5 years)
Career Record: 51-15 (5 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Jamey Chadwell
Defensive Coordinator: Mickey Matthews
 Conway, SC • Brooks Stadium (15,000)



EAST CAROLINA PIRATES

NATIONAL FORECAST: 112 • AAC EAST PREDICTION: 6 • PROJECTED RECORD: 3-9, 2-6 AAC

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|------------------|
| Sept. 2 | James Madison |
| Sept. 9 | at West Virginia |
| Sept. 16 | Virginia Tech |
| Sept. 30 | South Florida |
| Oct. 7 | Temple |
| Oct. 14 | at UCF |
| Oct. 21 | BYU |
| Oct. 28 | at Houston |
| Nov. 4 | at Connecticut |
| Nov. 11 | Tulane |
| Nov. 18 | Cincinnati |
| Nov. 25 | at Memphis |

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 3-9, 1-7 AAC

| | | | |
|----------|-------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | Western Carolina | W | 52-7 |
| Sept. 10 | NC State | W | 33-30 |
| Sept. 17 | at South Carolina | L | 15-20 |
| Sept. 24 | at Virginia Tech | L | 17-54 |
| Oct. 1 | UCF | L | 29-47 |
| Oct. 8 | at South Florida | L | 22-38 |
| Oct. 22 | at Cincinnati | L | 19-31 |
| Oct. 29 | Connecticut | W | 41-3 |
| Nov. 5 | at Tulsa | L | 24-45 |
| Nov. 12 | SMU | L | 31-55 |
| Nov. 19 | Navy | L | 31-66 |
| Nov. 26 | at Temple | L | 10-37 |

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Leroy Henley, WR, Pompano Beach, FL
2. Davondre Robinson, DB, Holly Hill, SC
3. Trace Christian, RB, Longwood, FL
4. Tyree Owens, DL, Oviedo, FL*
5. Kingsley Imedi, DB, Charlotte, NC
6. Jayden Borders, WR, Shelby, NC
7. Tajih Alston, DL, Vass, NC
8. Ben Norris, LB, Charlotte, NC
9. Bruce Bivens, LB, Houston, TX
10. Delvontae Harris, DB, Newnan, GA

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | AAC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 27.0 ppg | 9 | 75 |
| Rushing | 132.4 ypg | 10 | 110 |
| Passing | 334.7 ypg | 1 | 6 |
| Total | 467.1 ypg | 3 | 23 |
| DEFENSE | PER GAME | AAC | NATIONAL |
| Scoring | 36.1 ppg | 11 | 110 |
| Rushing | 228.5 ypg | 12 | 111 |
| Passing | 224.3 ypg | 5 | 62 |
| Total | 452.8 ypg | 9 | 100 |
| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | AAC | NATIONAL |
| -16 | -1.33 | 12 | 126 |

STAT CORNER

-13/-8.8

It's probably no coincidence that East Carolina's turnover margin fell by 13 while its field position margin dropped by 8.8 yards per drive.

OFFENSE Despite an offense that was often potent for coach Scottie Montgomery's first East Carolina team, the Pirates still walked the plank in a 3-9 campaign. Junior quarterback Gardner Minshew was set to take over, but Duke graduate transfer Thomas Sirk could win the job in preseason camp.

To enjoy smoother sailing, Montgomery wants to emphasize a potentially potent offensive line and find the running game ECU could never muster last season (10th in the AAC at 132.4 rushing yards per game). It's running back by committee among Devin Anderson, Hussein Howe, Anthony Scott and Derrell Scott, none of whom rushed for more than 384 yards last year.

But Montgomery knows his team, particularly that beat-up defense, needs a balanced offense. Count on the Pirates still doing their best work through the air, where the QB can look to seniors Quay Johnson, Jimmy Williams and Davon Grayson along with promising true freshman Leroy Henley.

Garrett McGinn will make the move from guard to center and will be joined by returning starting tackles Brandon Smith and Messiah Rice up front.

DEFENSE Ouch! That's going to leave a mark. The Pirates were last in the nation in quarterback sacks and last in turnovers forced. They had eight of both, and some teams do that in two games. So enter new defensive line coach Robert Prunty, new secondary coach Brandon Lynch, and a lot of new faces on the depth chart.

ECU is transitioning to a four-man front, and technically they have two starters back plus newcomer Tyree Owens, who originally signed with West Virginia. Senior end Kiant Anderson might be a better fit in this scheme, and there's experience and depth up front. Inside linebacker Jordan Williams, the team leader in tackles, is back, and the hope is that the new base scheme frees him and Ray Tillman to make more plays.

The secondary has experience with Colby Gore and Corey Seargent returning on the corners and the addition of Auburn transfer Tim Irvin. Irvin was spectacular in the spring alongside steady free safety Travon Simmons, who was too often literally the last line of defense last season. Veteran nickel back Bobby Fulp also starts in the new alignment.

SPECIALISTS Sophomore Jake Verity, who hit 1-of-2 field goals last year, will put his best foot forward as kicker and punter. Chris Love averaged 21.2 yards on kickoff returns, but improving play on special teams is a must. The Pirates ranked near the bottom of the league in both kickoff and punt coverage.

FINAL ANALYSIS The Pirates won their first two games, nearly upset South Carolina, and then the ship sank. It was the school's worst season in 12 years, plagued by untimely turnovers, special teams snafus and a porous Pirates defense. The coaching staff attributed some of the issues to an overall lack of depth, and as with any coaching change, there were some players who weren't buying in through the transition.

Now Montgomery has all hands on deck, and he hopes that a new defensive scheme (4-2-5), more experience and a little more depth can shore up that side of the ball a bit. Offensively, Sirk — assuming he wins the job — has big cleats to fill, as does a receiving corps without Zay Jones, the FBS career receptions leader. There's talent, though, and an attack that should be tailored to Sirk's strengths.

Look for the Pirates' prolific passing attack to be just fine, maybe even better if ECU can run the ball, too. There are questions on special teams, but overall Montgomery, who has earned props on the recruiting trail, is feeling goodwill in Greenville.



QUAY JOHNSON

"They need to clean up a lot on both sides of the ball. They turn the ball over a lot, it was easy to rattle them last season."

— An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (6)

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|----|-------------------------|
| WR 23 | Quay Johnson (Sr.) | 1 | Deondre Farrier (So.) |
| WR 81 | Jimmy Williams (Sr.) | 84 | Leroy Henley (Fr.) |
| WR 85 | Davon Grayson (Sr.) | 15 | Terrell Green (Jr.) |
| LT 78 | Messiah Rice (Jr.) | 74 | Justin Sandifer (Sr.) |
| LG 75 | Sean Bailey (Fr.) | 52 | Dqmarcus Shaw (Jr.) |
| C 55 | Garrett McGinn (Jr.) | 66 | Erik Lenzen (Jr.) |
| RG 70 | Cortez Herrin (So.) | 67 | D'Ante Smith (So.) |
| RT 62 | Brandon Smith (Sr.) | 79 | Dalton Montgomery (So.) |
| TE 86 | Stephen Baggett (Sr.) | 80 | Andrew Watley (So.) |
| QB | Thomas Sirk (Sr.) | 5 | Gardner Minshew (Jr.) |
| RB 25 | Devin Anderson (Jr.) | 28 | Hussein Howe (So.) |

DEFENSE (4)

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|----|--------------------------|
| DE 44 | Kendall Futrell (So.) | 10 | Yiannis Bowden (Jr.) |
| DT 97 | Demage Bailey (Sr.) | 93 | Jalen Price (So.) |
| DT 69 | Justin Brown (Jr.) | | Tyree Owens (Jr.) |
| DE 96 | Kiant Anderson (Sr.) | 90 | Randall Anderson (Sr.) |
| LB 7 | Jordan Williams (Sr.) | 33 | Cannon Gibbs (Jr.) |
| LB 21 | Ray Tillman (Sr.) | 30 | Joe Carter (Jr.) |
| CB 26 | Colby Gore (So.) | 35 | Chris Love (Sr.) |
| CB 5 | Corey Seargent (Jr.) | 22 | Marcus Holton, Jr. (Jr.) |
| CB 8 | Bobby Fulp (Sr.) | 14 | Travis Phillips (Sr.) |
| SS 27 | Tim Irvin (So.) | 37 | Trevian Hicks (Sr.) |
| FS 3 | Travon Simmons (Sr.) | 42 | Devon Sutton (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|
| K 98 | Jake Verity (So.) | KR 35 | Chris Love (Sr.) |
| P 98 | Jake Verity (So.) | PR 23 | Quay Johnson (Sr.) |

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Gardner Minshew, 202-119-1,347-4, 8 TDs
Rushing: Anthony Scott, 79 att., 384 yds., 2 TDs
Receiving: Quay Johnson, 58 rec., 563 yds., 3 TDs
Tackles: Jordan Williams, 77
Sacks: Jordan Williams, 1.0; Colby Gore, 1.0
Interceptions: Colby Gore, 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Scottie Montgomery
Record at School: 3-9 (1 year)
Career Record: 3-9 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Tony Petersen
Defensive Coordinator: Kenwick Thompson
Greenville, NC • Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium (50,000)

OLD DOMINION MONARCHS

NATIONAL FORECAST: 90 • C-USA EAST PREDICTION: 3 • PROJECTED RECORD: 7-5, 5-3 C-USA

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|---------------------|
| Sept. 2 | Albany |
| Sept. 9 | at Massachusetts |
| Sept. 16 | North Carolina |
| Sept. 23 | at Virginia Tech |
| Oct. 7 | Florida Atlantic |
| Oct. 14 | at Marshall |
| Oct. 20 | Western Kentucky |
| Oct. 28 | at North Texas |
| Nov. 4 | Charlotte |
| Nov. 11 | at FIU |
| Nov. 18 | Rice |
| Nov. 25 | at Middle Tennessee |

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 10-3, 7-1 C-USA

| | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 4 | Hampton | W | 54-21 |
| Sept. 10 | at Appalachian State | L | 7-31 |
| Sept. 17 | at NC State | L | 22-49 |
| Sept. 24 | UTSA | W | 33-19 |
| Oct. 1 | at Charlotte | W | 52-17 |
| Oct. 7 | Massachusetts | W | 36-16 |
| Oct. 22 | at Western Kentucky | L | 24-59 |
| Oct. 29 | at UTEP | W | 31-21 |
| Nov. 5 | Marshall | W | 38-14 |
| Nov. 12 | Southern Miss | W | 51-35 |
| Nov. 19 | at Florida Atlantic | W | 42-24 |
| Nov. 26 | FIU | W | 42-28 |
| Dec. 23 | vs. Eastern Michigan #W | | 24-20 |

#Bahamas Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Casey Perkins, RB, Smyrna, TN
2. Tracy White, CB, Hinesville, GA
3. Keisean Wilson, LB, Walldorf, MD
4. Amari Colbert, WR, Warner Robins, GA
5. Jack Miller, OL, Richmond, VA
6. Cameron Muller, OL, Columbia, SC
7. Marcus Haynes, DE, Bowie, MD
8. James Valle, DE, Burtonsville, MD
9. Steven Williams Jr., QB, Washington, DC
10. Stefano Feliciano, LB, Tampa, FL

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | C-USA | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-------|----------|
| Scoring | 35.1 ppg | 4 | 31 |
| Rushing | 196.8 ypg | 1 | 45 |
| Passing | 234.0 ypg | 6 | 64 |
| Total | 430.8 ypg | 5 | 50 |

| DEFENSE | PER GAME | C-USA | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-------|----------|
| Scoring | 27.2 ppg | 2 | 57 |
| Rushing | 157.2 ypg | 5 | 50 |
| Passing | 226.5 ypg | 4 | 63 |
| Total | 383.6 ypg | 3 | 49 |

| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | C-USA | NATIONAL |
|-----------|----------|-------|----------|
| +13 | +1.00 | 1 | 4 |

STAT CORNER

+14

ODU committed more than one turnover in a game just twice, and the Monarchs' turnover margin flipped from minus-1 to plus-13 — a 14-turnover swing

OFFENSE Historically, quarterback play hasn't been an area of concern for Old Dominion. And that includes seasons when conventional wisdom would suggest it should be. In 2016, the Monarchs handed the reins to David Washington, a converted receiver. Washington responded by throwing for 31 touchdowns versus five picks. With Washington gone, Monarchs coach Bobby Wilder has several candidates for the quarterback gig. That list includes last season's backup Blake LaRussa and redshirt freshman Drayton Arnold. Wilder believes in his staff's ability to develop a quarterback, so he's sure the competition will yield a clear choice.

It helps that the running back tandem of senior Ray Lawry, the school's all-time leading rusher, and junior Jeremy Cox returns after combining for 2,239 total yards last season.

Of the 10 players who caught three or more passes last season, nine return, including prime targets in receivers Jonathan Duhart and Travis Fulgham. But someone from the large cast of receiving threats will have to offset the loss of senior Zach Pascal, who racked up 946 yards last season.

By the end of last season, just one senior was starting on the Monarchs' line, meaning this season's squad should have plenty of continuity. Junior center Nick Clarke will anchor a unit that will be able to cycle in as many as nine linemen whom Wilder trusts.

DEFENSE Wilder credits the defensive line as the unit that set the tone for the team's giant leap forward last season. The Monarchs' opponents averaged 8.6 fewer points and 54.2 fewer yards per game than in 2015 thanks in large part to the rock-solid group up front. And much to Wilder's delight, the bulk of that group returns. Defensive end Oshane Ximines racked up a team-best 7.5 sacks, while fellow edge rusher Bunmi Rotimi had seven of his own. Two more dangerous ends, Daniel Appouh and Tim Ward, are also back. Wilder says there's a rotation of six experienced players who will play on the inside of the defensive line.

But behind them, there are concerns. The linebackers will be young and thin. Junior Marvin Branch is the most experienced option. Sophomores Terez Dickerson and Derek Wilder, the coach's son, will be in the mix, too. But with little in the way of sure things, Wilder says he might be forced to scrap the Monarchs' preferred three-linebacker look in favor of a nickel scheme should no clear choices emerge.

It helps that the secondary is deep and experienced with a pair of cornerbacks in senior Brandon Addison and sophomore Jamez Brickhouse having already distinguished themselves as big-game players. Junior Sean Carter and seniors Rob Thompson and Justice Davila will provide some continuity at safety.

SPECIALISTS Last season, freshman kicker Brad Davis stepped in for injured starter Chris Kirtley and hit 10 of his 12 field goal tries and 45 of his 46 extra points. With both Davis and Kirtley back, the Monarchs should have some healthy competition. Bailey Cate will handle the punting duties again, while Darrell Brown and Kesean Strong will have the inside track on the return jobs.

FINAL ANALYSIS While falling a game shy of a league title, Old Dominion's 10-win 2016 campaign was undeniably a breakthrough. And with 15 starters back, the Monarchs have every reason to expect that success to continue. "I'm a firm believer that, when you have success, if you can carry the momentum and then demand more from yourself and the players, you can continue to have success," Wilder says. "That's what we've been doing."



RAY LAWRY

"It's a great place to recruit because of the talent in that area. That's probably the best job in our league because of the location and their fan base."

— An opposing C-USA assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (8)

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|----|------------------------|
| WR 15 | Isaiah Harper (Jr.) | 3 | Marques Little (Sr.) |
| WR 7 | Travis Fulgham (Jr.) | 2 | Hassan Patterson (So.) |
| WR 21 | Jonathan Duhart (Sr.) | 8 | Noah Ellison (Fr.) |
| LT 71 | Isaac Weaver (So.) | 62 | Hunter Sosebee (So.) |
| LG 74 | Tony Barnett (So.) | 68 | A.J. Davison (Jr.) |
| C 63 | Nick Clarke (Jr.) | 77 | Manny Matiarena (Sr.) |
| RG 56 | Devin Hannan (So.) | 61 | Andrew Lawson (Fr.) |
| RT 73 | Chad Hendricks (Jr.) | 78 | Darius Garcia (Sr.) |
| TE 1 | Melvin Vaughn (Sr.) | 85 | Nijee Cox (So.) |
| QB 11 | Blake LaRussa (So.) | 9 | Drayton Arnold (Fr.) |
| RB 33 | Ray Lawry (Sr.) | 35 | Jeremy Cox (Jr.) |

DEFENSE (7)

| | | | |
|-------|------------------------|----|------------------------|
| DE 44 | Bunmi Rotimi (Sr.) | 4 | Daniel Appouh (Jr.) |
| DT 54 | Pat Toal (Jr.) | 55 | Brandon Tyson (Jr.) |
| DT 90 | Miles Fox (Jr.) | 53 | Ryan Londree (Jr.) |
| DE 7 | Oshane Ximines (Jr.) | 2 | Tim Ward (Jr.) |
| LB 39 | Jordan Young (Fr.) | 47 | Anthony Resek (So.) |
| LB 42 | Derek Wilder (So.) | 43 | Zach Lackman (Fr.) |
| LB 37 | Marvin Branch (Jr.) | 34 | Lawrence Garner (Fr.) |
| CB 1 | Brandon Addison (Sr.) | 27 | Jelani Carter (So.) |
| CB 5 | Jamez Brickhouse (So.) | 19 | Akimi Bundu-Fitz (So.) |
| FS 20 | Rob Thompson (Sr.) | 28 | Justice Davila (Sr.) |
| SS 31 | Sean Carter (Jr.) | 25 | Denzel Williams (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | |
|------|-------------------|-------|---------------------|
| K 41 | Brad Davis (So.) | KR 4 | Kesean Strong (Jr.) |
| P 96 | Bailey Cate (So.) | PR 80 | Darrell Brown (So.) |

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Blake LaRussa, 24-14-140-1, 0 TDs
Rushing: Ray Lawry, 200 att., 1,255 yds., 11 TDs
Receiving: Jonathan Duhart, 48 rec., 735 yds., 9 TDs
Tackles: Sean Carter, 60
Sacks: Oshane Ximines, 7.5
Interceptions: Three players tied with 2

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Bobby Wilder
Record at School: 67-30 (8 years)
Career Record: 67-30 (8 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Brian Scott
Defensive Coordinator: Rich Nagy
 Norfolk, VA • Foreman Field (20,118)



UCF KNIGHTS

NATIONAL FORECAST: 79 • AAC EAST PREDICTION: 2 • PROJECTED RECORD: 7-5, 5-3 AAC

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|---------------|
| Sept. 2 | FIU |
| Sept. 9 | Memphis |
| Sept. 16 | Georgia Tech |
| Sept. 23 | at Maryland |
| Sept. 30 | Maine |
| Oct. 7 | at Cincinnati |
| Oct. 14 | East Carolina |
| Oct. 21 | at Navy |
| Nov. 4 | at SMU |
| Nov. 11 | Connecticut |
| Nov. 18 | at Temple |
| Nov. 24 | South Florida |

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 6-7, 4-4 AAC

| | | | |
|----------|-----------------------|--------|-------|
| Sept. 3 | South Carolina State | W | 38-0 |
| Sept. 10 | at Michigan | L | 51-14 |
| Sept. 17 | Maryland | (ot) L | 30-24 |
| Sept. 24 | at FIU | W | 53-14 |
| Oct. 1 | at East Carolina | W | 47-29 |
| Oct. 15 | Temple | L | 26-25 |
| Oct. 22 | at Connecticut | W | 24-16 |
| Oct. 29 | at Houston | L | 31-24 |
| Nov. 5 | Tulane | W | 37-6 |
| Nov. 12 | Cincinnati | W | 24-3 |
| Nov. 19 | Tulsa | L | 35-20 |
| Nov. 26 | at South Florida | L | 48-31 |
| Dec. 17 | vs. Arkansas State #1 | L | 31-13 |

#Cure Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Cordarrius Richardson, RB, Memphis, TN
2. Emmanuel Greene, WR, Pompano Beach, FL
3. Bentavious Thompson, RB, Miami, FL
4. Marlon Williams, WR, Mobile, AL
5. Sterling Jones, LB, Montgomery, AL
6. Gabriel Luyanda, LB, Tampa, FL*
7. Jeremiah Zio, DE, St. Petersburg, FL
8. Otis Anderson, RB, Jacksonville, FL
9. Darriel Mack Jr., QB, Norfolk, VA
10. Zamari Maxwell, DB, Largo, FL

*junior college transfer

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | AAC | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 28.8 ppg | 7 | 66 |
| Rushing | 141.2 ypg | 9 | 104 |
| Passing | 209.7 ypg | 9 | 89 |
| Total | 350.8 ypg | 10 | 113 |

| DEFENSE | PER GAME | AAC | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 24.6 ppg | 3 | 42 |
| Rushing | 169.5 ypg | 5 | 62 |
| Passing | 200.8 ypg | 2 | 28 |
| Total | 370.3 ypg | 4 | 39 |

| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | AAC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|----------|-----|----------|
| +1 | +0.08 | 8 | 58 |

STAT CORNER

-1.76

UCF allowed 1.76 fewer yards per play in 2016 – by far the biggest improvement in FBS – lowering its average from 6.54 to 4.78.

OFFENSE The “UCFast” offense was largely a work in progress in Scott Frost’s first season — although not unexpectedly, as that side of the ball was in full rebuild mode coming off the previous winless season. The good news is that virtually every key player on that side returns. All eyes will be on the quarterback spot and offensive line to show the most improvement, two areas that had their share of struggles in 2016.

Sophomore quarterback McKenzie Milton enters the season as the presumed starter after earning the top job a few games into his rookie season. He’s shown to be quick and agile, important traits for a quarterback in Frost’s offense, but questions linger about his overall arm strength. True freshman Darriel Mack Jr., who likely enters the season as the backup by default, could challenge Milton for starter status depending on how quickly he can pick up the nuances of the system.

The offensive line took a step back when top blocker Tyler Hudanick was sidelined in mid-October with a season-ending injury. He is expected to return to full strength. One player to watch is Jordan Johnson, who is moving from guard to center.

The Knights have a bevy of skill-position talent, notably junior wide receiver Tre’Quan Smith, the team leader in receptions and yards the past two seasons. Sophomores Jawon Hamilton and Adrian Killins provide a formidable 1-2 punch in the backfield. Killins averaged 6.5 yards per carry in a reserve role last season.

DEFENSE UCF’s turnaround from winless to a bowl team last season was due in large part to the consistent play of the defense, a unit headlined by outside linebacker Shaquem Griffin, the American Athletic Conference Defensive Player of the Year. Now a senior, Griffin will try to top the league-leading 11.5 sacks he posted a season ago.

Defensive coordinator Erik Chinander does have holes to fill — all four starters in the secondary and three of four linebackers have graduated. That’s a lot of experience to replace as those players comprised seven of the team’s top nine leading tacklers. Though inexperienced, UCF does have players waiting in the wings such as cornerbacks Brandon Moore and Rashard Causey, safety Tre Neal and linebackers Nate Evans and Dedrick Bacote. And big things are expected from safety Shawn Burgess-Becker, a highly touted transfer from Alabama.

The defensive line should be a strength with the return of all the key players. Senior nose guard Jamiyus Pittman, the most experienced of the bunch, is considered the leader of the defense. End Trysten Hill, a weight room warrior, has a promising future.

SPECIALISTS Killins has electrifying speed that makes him a home run threat in the return game, evident from his 100-yard kick return for a TD last season against East Carolina. The ever-reliable Caleb Houston has graduated after four seasons at punter, passing the torch to junior Mac Loudermilk. Matt Wright has been a solid performer his first two seasons as UCF’s field goal kicker, making 17-of-22 attempts a season ago.

FINAL ANALYSIS Attaining six wins and reaching a bowl game in Frost’s first season was a solid starting point — if not a bit ahead of schedule. With questions at several key positions, it’s likely too early to start thinking about a conference championship, but another bowl trip should be achievable if the offensive line takes the necessary steps forward and there isn’t too big of a drop-off on defense.

UCF will be tested early with a challenging first month that includes a Week 2 date against Memphis and non-conference matchups against Georgia Tech and Maryland.



SHAQUEM GRIFFIN

“Scott Frost is recruiting the hell out of that state and has a head start on the other first-year guys at (USF, Florida Atlantic, FIU).”

— An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (9)

| | | | |
|----|----|------------------------|----------------------------|
| WR | 4 | Tre’Quan Smith (Jr.) | Marlon Williams (Fr.) |
| WR | 11 | Cam Stewart (Jr.) | 7 Emmanuel Greene (Fr.) |
| WR | 5 | Dredrick Snelson (So.) | Gabriel Davis (Fr.) |
| LT | 66 | Aaron Evans (Sr.) | 77 Jake Brown (So.) |
| LG | 53 | Tyler Hudanick (Jr.) | 75 Tate Hernly (Sr.) |
| C | 72 | Jordan Johnson (So.) | 70 Luke Palmer (Jr.) |
| RG | 79 | Chavis Dickey (Sr.) | 74 Boman Swanson (Fr.) |
| RT | 78 | Wyatt Miller (Jr.) | 68 Charles Sprengel (Sr.) |
| TE | 88 | Jordan Akins (Jr.) | 15 Jordan Franks (Sr.) |
| QB | 10 | McKenzie Milton (So.) | Darriel Mack Jr. (Fr.) |
| RB | 1 | Jawon Hamilton (So.) | 9 Adrian Killins Jr. (So.) |

DEFENSE (4)

| | | | |
|-----|----|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| DE | 95 | Trysten Hill (So.) | 98 Brendon Hayes (So.) |
| DT | 5 | Jamiyus Pittman (Sr.) | 91 Joey Connors (Jr.) |
| DE | 93 | Tony Guerao (Sr.) | 49 Seyvon Lowry (Sr.) |
| OLB | 18 | Shaquem Griffin (Sr.) | 99 Titus Davis (So.) |
| ILB | 56 | Pat Jasinski (Jr.) | Sterling Jones (Fr.) |
| ILB | 44 | Nate Evans (So.) | 40 Christian Lezzer (Jr.) |
| OLB | 35 | Dedrick Bacote (Fr.) | Gabriel Luyanda (Fr.) |
| CB | 30 | Rashard Causey (Jr.) | 36 Antwan Collier (Fr.) |
| CB | 20 | Brandon Moore (So.) | 46 Chris Johnson (Sr.) |
| FS | 28 | Shawn Burgess-Becker (So.) | 25 Kyle Gibson (Jr.) |
| SS | 23 | Tre Neal (Jr.) | 26 Brandon Scott (So.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | | | |
|---|----|----------------------|----|----|--------------------------|
| K | 11 | Matthew Wright (Jr.) | KR | 9 | Adrian Killins Jr. (So.) |
| P | 48 | Mac Loudermilk (Jr.) | PR | 46 | Chris Johnson (Sr.) |

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: McKenzie Milton, 336-194-1,983-7, 10 TDs
Rushing: Jawon Hamilton, 139 att., 495 yds., 4 TDs
Receiving: Tre’Quan Smith, 57 rec., 853 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Shaquem Griffin, 92
Sacks: Shaquem Griffin, 11.5
Interceptions: Four players tied with 1

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Scott Frost
Record at School: 6-7 (1 year)
Career Record: 6-7 (1 year)
Offensive Coordinator: Troy Walters
Defensive Coordinator: Erik Chinander
 Orlando, FL • Spectrum Stadium (44,206)



USF BULLS

NATIONAL FORECAST: 24 • AAC EAST PREDICTION: 1 • PROJECTED RECORD: 12-1, 7-1 AAC

2017 SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Aug. 26 | at San Jose State |
| Sept. 2 | Stony Brook |
| Sept. 9 | at Connecticut |
| Sept. 15 | Illinois |
| Sept. 21 | Temple |
| Sept. 30 | at East Carolina |
| Oct. 14 | Massachusetts |
| Oct. 21 | at Tulane |
| Oct. 28 | Cincinnati |
| Nov. 4 | Houston |
| Nov. 18 | Tulsa |
| Nov. 24 | at UCF |

2016 RESULTS

FINAL RECORD: 11-2, 7-1 AAC

| | | | |
|----------|------------------------|---|-------|
| Sept. 3 | Towson | W | 56-20 |
| Sept. 10 | Northern Illinois | W | 48-17 |
| Sept. 17 | at Syracuse | W | 45-20 |
| Sept. 24 | Florida State | L | 35-55 |
| Oct. 1 | at Cincinnati | W | 45-20 |
| Oct. 8 | East Carolina | W | 38-22 |
| Oct. 15 | Connecticut | W | 42-27 |
| Oct. 21 | at Temple | L | 30-46 |
| Oct. 28 | Navy | W | 52-45 |
| Nov. 12 | at Memphis | W | 49-42 |
| Nov. 19 | at SMU | W | 35-27 |
| Nov. 26 | UCF | W | 48-31 |
| Dec. 29 | vs. S. Carolina # [ot] | W | 46-39 |

#Birmingham Bowl

TOP 10 RECRUITS

1. Naytron Culppepper, DB, Miami, FL
2. Kevauhn Dingle, WR, Miami, FL
3. Jean Marcellus, OL, Tampa, FL
4. Nick Roberts, DB, Orange Park, FL
5. Jabreel Stephens, DL, Seffner, FL
6. Bentlee Sanders, DB, Tampa, FL
7. Jernard Phillips, WR, Miami, FL
8. Demetris Harris, OL, Jacksonville, FL
9. Randall St. Felix, WR, Miami, FL
10. Darrien Grant, DL, Bradenton, FL

2016 RANKINGS

| OFFENSE | PER GAME | AAC | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 43.8 ppg | 1 | 4 |
| Rushing | 285.3 ypg | 2 | 5 |
| Passing | 226.2 ypg | 8 | 70 |
| Total | 511.5 ypg | 2 | 11 |

| DEFENSE | PER GAME | AAC | NATIONAL |
|---------|-----------|-----|----------|
| Scoring | 31.6 ppg | 10 | 92 |
| Rushing | 196.5 ypg | 9 | 84 |
| Passing | 285.5 ypg | 12 | 122 |
| Total | 482.0 ypg | 12 | 120 |

| TO MARGIN | PER GAME | AAC | NATIONAL |
|-----------|----------|-----|----------|
| +9 | +0.69 | 2 | 14 |

STAT CORNER

8.1

USF averaged 8.1 yards per play on first down, second in FBS. Of course, the Bulls also allowed 6.5 per first down play, 104th.

OFFENSE Senior quarterback Quinton Flowers, a poor man's Lamar Jackson, should get some Heisman Trophy support if he continues on his upward trajectory. Last season, Flowers was the American Athletic Conference's Offensive Player of the Year when he rushed for 1,530 yards, the fourth-highest total ever by a FBS quarterback, and 18 touchdowns.

"Quinton will only build on what he did last season," says first-year South Florida coach Charlie Strong, who promises an up-tempo offensive style that suits Flowers' strengths. "He's hungry to get better and he's providing a ton of leadership out there."

Flowers became a much-improved passer last season (62.5 completion percentage, 24 touchdowns, just seven interceptions), and part of the reason is a deep, talented receiving corps. Junior Tyre McCants, who had 25 catches, and senior Marquez Valdes-Scantling (22 catches) provide speedy options. Sophomore Darnell Salomon has the potential to blossom after limited duty last year. Also look for the big-play tight ends — sophomore Mitchell Wilcox and junior Elkanah Dillon, who combined for a 22.8-yard receiving average on 20 catches — to offer a diversion.

The backfield took a hit when Marlon Mack, a three-time first-team All-AAC running back who had three 1,000-yard rushing seasons and a South Florida career record of 3,609 yards, skipped his senior season for the NFL Draft. But Strong expressed confidence in the returning backs, particularly do-everything senior D'Ernest Johnson, who rushed for 543 yards and had 28 receptions while being the team's best return man and scoring 14 total touchdowns.

Two starters must be replaced on the offensive line, where center Cameron Ruff and guard Jeremi Hall are expected to be the anchors.

DEFENSE The Bulls return seven of their top nine tacklers from a defense that struggled in 2016, ranking 120th nationally with 482.0 yards allowed per game. Overall, the tackling was horrendous. Brian Jean-Mary, the new defensive coordinator, says he will employ multiple looks, including a 3-3-5 alignment, which will utilize one deep free safety and a strong safety closer to the box. The secondary is stocked with experience, including cornerback Deatrick Nichols, a big-play senior who has 27 career starts. The Bulls' defensive line also has experience but as a group did not get enough pressure on the quarterback last season.

Middle linebacker Auggie Sanchez, who ranks second nationally in career tackles among active players (303), is the leader who calls alignments and audibles. He will adjust to his fourth defensive coordinator in as many seasons.

SPECIALISTS With the Bulls scoring a program-record 77 TDs, some pressure was relieved from junior placekicker Emilio Nadelman, who made all seven of his field goal attempts. Senior punter Jonathan Hernandez developed into a formidable weapon with a 41.2-yard average, 25 punts downed inside the 20-yard line and 13 that surpassed 50 yards. Johnson led the league with a 11.8-yard average on punt returns.

FINAL ANALYSIS Fired from Texas, Strong quickly landed at South Florida after Willie Taggart bolted for Oregon. The Bulls, 11-2 last season and returning 16 starters, could be favored to win all of their games. Coming off the school's first-ever season-ending top-20 national ranking and seeking the first league title in the program's history, they are a consensus pick to capture the AAC championship.

"I see no ceiling on what this program can accomplish," Strong says. If South Florida reaches its potential, lifts a conference-title trophy and plays in a major bowl game, it will have soared to heights that seemed unimaginable just a few seasons ago.



QUINTON FLOWERS

"They have real athletes in that program, and they can get them, but the school has to step up and look at UCF's level of commitment."

— An opposing AAC assistant coach

DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE (7)

| | | | | |
|----|----|---------------------------|----|------------------------|
| WR | 8 | Tyre McCants (Jr.) | 81 | Ryeshene Bronson (Sr.) |
| WR | 1 | Chris Barr (Jr.) | | Kevauhn Dingle (Fr.) |
| WR | 11 | M. Valdes-Scantling (Sr.) | 3 | Darnell Salomon (So.) |
| LT | 55 | Eric Mayes (Jr.) | 78 | Billy Atterbury (So.) |
| LG | 73 | Jeremi Hall (Sr.) | 70 | Glen Bethel (Sr.) |
| C | 74 | Cameron Ruff (Sr.) | 68 | Michael Galati (Jr.) |
| RG | 72 | Brooks Larkin (So.) | 52 | Michael Wiggs (Fr.) |
| RT | 77 | Marcus Norman (So.) | 79 | Grant Polk (So.) |
| TE | 89 | Mitchell Wilcox (So.) | 85 | Elkanah Dillon (Jr.) |
| QB | 9 | Quinton Flowers (Sr.) | 7 | Brett Kean (So.) |
| RB | 2 | D'Ernest Johnson (Sr.) | 13 | Darius Tice (Sr.) |

DEFENSE (9)

| | | | | |
|-----|----|------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| DE | 94 | Kirk Livingstone (So.) | 56 | Juwuan Brown (Jr.) |
| DT | 10 | Deadrin Senat (Sr.) | 95 | Marlon Gonzalez (So.) |
| DT | 60 | Bruce Hector (Sr.) | 99 | Kevin Bronson (Jr.) |
| DE | 98 | Mike Love (Sr.) | 15 | Vincent Jackson (Jr.) |
| MLB | 43 | Auggie Sanchez (Sr.) | 53 | Danny Thomas (Jr.) |
| WLB | 54 | Nico Sawtelle (So.) | 12 | Andre Polk (Fr.) |
| CB | 3 | Deatrick Nichols (Sr.) | 14 | Mike Hampton (Fr.) |
| CB | 19 | Ronnie Hoggins (Jr.) | 23 | Mazzi Wilkins (Jr.) |
| S | 21 | Khalid McGee (Jr.) | 37 | Nate Ferguson (Jr.) |
| S | 20 | Devin Abraham (Sr.) | 26 | Craig Watts (Fr.) |
| S | 13 | Tajee Fullwood (Sr.) | 18 | Jaymon Thomas (Jr.) |

SPECIAL TEAMS

| | | | | | |
|---|----|--------------------------|----|---|------------------------|
| K | 35 | Emilio Nadelman (Sr.) | KR | 2 | D'Ernest Johnson (Sr.) |
| P | 44 | Jonathan Hernandez (Sr.) | PR | 2 | D'Ernest Johnson (Sr.) |

BOLD indicates returning starter

RETURNING LEADERS

Passing: Quinton Flowers, 331-207-2,812-7, 24 TDs
Rushing: Quinton Flowers, 198 att., 1,530 yds., 18 TDs
Receiving: D'Ernest Johnson, 28 rec., 293 yds., 5 TDs
Tackles: Auggie Sanchez, 120
Sacks: Bruce Hector, 6.0; Auggie Sanchez, 6.0
Interceptions: Deatrick Nichols, 4

TEAM INFORMATION

Head Coach: Charlie Strong
Record at School: First Season
Career Record: 53-37 (7 years)
Offensive Coordinator: Sterlin Gilbert
Defensive Coordinator: Brian Jean-Mary
 Tampa, FL • Raymond James Stadium (65,890)

QB

RANKINGS

Quarterback is the most important position in football — arguably, it's the most important position in sports. Just for fun, we took on the difficult task of ranking all 130 starting quarterbacks in the FBS ranks. We considered several factors, including 2016 statistics, projections for 2017, value to the team, recruiting profile and overall talent. Note: This ranking might differ slightly from the quarterback unit rankings found elsewhere in the magazine. Those factor a team's entire quarterback situation, not just the starter.



BAKER MAYFIELD, OKLAHOMA



KYLE SHURMUR, VANDERBILT



RICHARD LAGOW, INDIANA

1. **BAKER MAYFIELD**, Oklahoma
2. **SAM DARNOLD**, USC
3. **LAMAR JACKSON**, Louisville
4. **J.T. BARRETT**, Ohio State
5. **JAKE BROWNING**, Washington
6. **MASON RUDOLPH**, Oklahoma State
7. **LUKE FALK**, Washington State
8. **QUINTON FLOWERS**, USF
9. **TRACE MCSORLEY**, Penn State
10. **JALEN HURTS**, Alabama
11. **JOSH ROSEN**, UCLA
12. **JARRETT STIDHAM**, Auburn
13. **DEONDRE FRANCOIS**, Florida State
14. **AUSTIN ALLEN**, Arkansas
15. **NICK FITZGERALD**, Mississippi State
16. **LOGAN WOODSIDE**, Toledo
17. **BRENT STOCKSTILL**, Middle Tennessee
18. **MIKE WHITE**, WKU
19. **BRETT RYPIEN**, Boise State
20. **JOSH ALLEN**, Wyoming
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